Voices de la Luna
A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine
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“A poem … begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. … It finds the thought and the thought finds the words.”  Robert Frost  (1874–1963)

BOTANICAL GARDEN—33 acres of formal gardens, pools, fountains, and natural areas; Native Texas Trail, Lucille Halsell Conservatory. www.sabot.org

CARVER COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTER—This venue traces its historic roots back some 85 years. It is both a gallery for contemporary art exhibits and a theater for performing artists. www.thecarver.org

GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER—The center is dedicated to the development, preservation, and promotion of Mexican-American arts. www.guadalupeculturalarts.org

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. www.texanartscultures.com

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. www.riverwalkjazz.org

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

MAJESTIC THEATER—Opened in 1929 and restored in 1989 as a performing arts center, the Majestic is said to be one of the finest “atmospheric” theaters ever built. www.themajestic.com/theatre.htm

McNAY ART MUSEUM—The mission of the McNay Art Museum is to maintain an art museum on the premises of the estate of Mrs. Mc Nay for the advancement and enjoyment of modern and early art, and for the educational advantage of the public. www.mcnayart.org

MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE—This venue includes exhibits of contemporary Mexican artists, portal.sre.gob.mx/culturamexsaing/

SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART—This six-building complex of renovated historic buildings, opened in 1981, focuses on art of the Americas, past and present, but also houses Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and East Asian collections. www.samuseum.org

SAN ANTONIO OPERA—The opera currently performs at the Lila Cockrell Theater. Future performances include Don Giovanni and The Barber of Seville. www.saopera.com

SAN PEDRO PLAYHOUSE—Call the box office for tickets and more information: (210) 733-7258. www.sanpedroplayhouse.com

SAN ANTONIO SYMPHONY—The mission of the San Antonio Symphony is to inspire, educate, and entertain the people of, and visitors to, San Antonio and South Texas through the performance of live music. www.sasymp.org

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF ART—Housed in the city’s only remaining example of French Provincial architecture, the Craft Center was established as an alternative art school at the site in 1971. www.swschool.org

WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE—Extensive exhibits cover natural history and natural science of Texas. Rebuilt on grounds are four early Texas houses and a furnished log cabin. Current exhibit (through May 26): Witte through Time: 85 Years and Still Growing. www.wittemuseum.org


Poetry & Arts Events
Please see the Poetry & Arts Events section on page 44 and at www.voicesdelaluna.com.

Voices de la Luna: Volume 3 Number 4, July 2011
Reviewed by Caitlin Reid

NewPages.com

Voices de la Luna drops the reader into the vibrant arts community of San Antonio, Texas. The magazine describes itself as “actively promoting poetry and arts in San Antonio by supporting other literary and arts organizations.” Please read the entire review at: http://www.newpages.com/literary-magazine-reviews/2011-12-16/#Voices-de-la-Luna-v3-n4-July-2011.

Editor’s Note
James R. Adair

The state of the world calls out for poetry to save it
—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Poetry as Insurgent Art”

April is National Poetry Month, the time of the year when lovers and poets of all stripes greet spring with open arms, excited about the possibilities of a new season of growth and opportunity. True, some see the promises of spring as illusory or overblown, as Edna St. Vincent Millay suggests—“April / comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers”—and T. S. Eliot even calls April “the cruellest month,” but for the most part these sentiments are outliers.

More in tune with the feelings of many is Chaucer, who describes April as the ideal time to take a road trip: “When April with his showers sweet with fruit / The drought of March has pierced unto the root.” The journey to Canterbury was the first in a long line of spring break trips.

Spring is a time of renewal, of new chances. In the world of sports it’s time for March Madness and Opening Day on the baseball diamond. Even if your favorite boys of summer left you feeling no joy last October, you know that every team begins April atop the standings, tied with last year’s division winner.

Not everyone is excited about the advent of spring, of course. With the economy still languishing in many areas and unemployment remaining stubbornly high, a new season only reminds some of the existential threats that surround us (see Millay, above). Furthermore, instability reigns in many parts of the world, with threats of war, famine, and military coup imminent. Some might say that in such times poetry is irrelevant, but on the contrary, it is in times like these that we need poets the most, as Ferlinghetti suggests in the quote at the top of this piece.

Poets not only supply hope, they also bring vision to a world in tumult—and is there ever a time when the world is not threatened by disasters, man-made or natural? Poets challenge their contemporaries to think about the world in a new way, often holding themselves up to ridicule, or worse. As Ferlinghetti again says,

Constantly risking absurdity and death whenever he performs above the heads of his audience the poet like an acrobat climbs on rime to a high wire of his own making

(“Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)”)

So welcome, National Poetry Month, and welcome all poets, famous and unknown, who contribute your hope, vision, and voice to the great conversation of life.
Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2012
Cover Page Art

River Light 4. Acrylic on Canvas.
by Donna Simon

Donna Simon has a BFA in painting from the Tyler School of Art and an MA in secondary education from Hofstra University. She leads Seeing Art San Antonio Tours, an organization that offers tours of artists’ studios and galleries in San Antonio’s nationally recognized contemporary art community. She is a founding board member of SAY Si, a Kronkosky Fellow at the McNay Art Museum, a painter, a teacher, and a lecturer at the Chautauqua Institute in upstate New York. She spent nineteen years teaching fine arts and art history in high schools and was an art history lecturer at St. Mary’s University. In 1998 she was the recipient of a Teacher Excellence Award from the University of Texas.

Simon’s recent shows include:
• May 2010 – Annual Juried Faculty Art Show, Southwest School of Art, San Antonio, TX
• January 2009 – River Wall/River Light, Gallery Nord, San Antonio, TX
• June 2008 – Butterfly Series, Café Paladar, San Antonio, TX
• May 2008 – Annual Juried Faculty Art Show, Southwest School of Art, San Antonio, TX
• September 2006 – 3: Three Artists Work, The Radius, San Antonio, TX
• March 2006 – Flight Patterns, Arte Reyes Gallery, San Antonio, TX
• November 2006 – New Work by Donna Simon, Arte Reyes Gallery, San Antonio, TX

Asked to describe her work as an artist, Simon offers this artist statement:

One of my most cherished activities is my morning power walk on the Riverwalk Annex in the King William neighborhood. As I move along, I truly enjoy looking at the variety of textures and patinas on the river walls. Furthermore, I am fascinated with the sunlight reflecting off the water onto the walls at a very specific time and place along my path.

That I am able to transfer this visual information into this painting series has been a wonderful challenge. In addition, sharing this morning celebration with the public is a joyous event for me. Come walk with me and notice the daily wonders in nature right before our eyes along with some you might have overlooked.

Letter to the Editors

I have been reading your magazine and the website for Voices de la Luna. Very excellent publication and an awesome contribution to the local art community. For that I thank you!

Warmest,

Siggi Ragnar 15 January 2012
**Featured Poem**

**Feeding You**

*Carmen Tafolla*

I have slipped chile under your skin
secretly wrapped in each enchilada
hot and soothing
carefully cut into bitefuls for you as a toddler
increasing in power and intensity as you grew
until it could burn
forever

silently spiced into the rice
soaked into the bean caldo
smoothed into the avocado

I have slipped chile under your skin
drop by fiery drop
until it ignited
the sunaltar fire
in your blood

I have squeezed cilantro into the breast milk
made sure you were nurtured with
the clean taste of corn stalks
with the wildness of thick leaves
of untamed monte
of unscheduled growth

I have ground the earth of these Américas in my molcajete
until it became a fine and piquant spice
sprinkled it surely into each spoonful of food
that would have to expand to fit your soul

Dear Son Dear Son
Dear Corn Chile Cilantro Son
This
is your herencia
This
is what is yours
This
is what your mother fed you
to keep you alive

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*This poem was first published in Yapanchitra, Calcutta, India, 2006, by Carmen Tafolla. Note on Spanish: Monte means the unmanicured wild country, either jungle or brush country, but uncivilized, natural growth. Molcajete is a mortar and pestle made of volcanic rock and used in traditional Mexican food to grind spices. Herencia means inheritance.*

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**Carmen Tafolla**

**The First San Antonio Poet Laureate**

*Bryce Milligan*

One of San Antonio’s most recognizable writers is Carmen Tafolla, whose poetry, fiction, articles, and books for children all explore the cultural depths of the city—and reflect her family’s long history here. Born on San Antonio’s West Side in 1951, Tafolla attended local public schools until she was “discovered” and given a four-year scholarship to a private high school for gifted students. Although that experience was little short of culture shock at the time, it provided the young writer an excellent-if-mainstream education. It also afforded her the opportunity to reflect on her place “between worlds” and to hone her observational skills. She learned that neither her beloved West Side nor the literature of her people was seen in a positive light by all. This initial encounter with cultural ignorance formed the basis of Tafolla’s life-long work in support of multicultural education and understanding. In 1999, Tafolla was presented with the Art of Peace Award by St. Mary’s University, for “writings which contribute to peace, justice, and human understanding.” Of all her literary prizes, she cherishes this one because it honors not just one book, but the philosophical intent of all her work.

Tafolla began to publish her poetry in the 1970s during the Chicano movimientio in local magazines like Caracol. Her first book was a collaboration with local poets Reyes Cardenas and Cecilio Garcia-Camarillo, *Get Your Tortillas Together* (1976). By the time she received her Ph.D. in bilingual education from the University of Texas in 1982, Tafolla was already head writer for the pioneering bilingual children’s television program, *Sonrisas*. Her first collection of poetry, *Curandera*, was published in 1983 by M&A Editions, here in San Antonio. Chicana scholars long regarded *Curandera* as something of a core document in the study of code-switching as a literary technique. The most notable poems in the book are “Los Corts”—five poems, each written in a different West Side voice. Dr. Santiago Daydi-Tolson identified, as long ago as 1985, four distinct language registers in the poetry of Carmen Tafolla: formal literary English, colloquial English affected by Chicano Spanish, colloquial Spanish influenced by English, and finally formal Spanish. Scholar Yolanda Broyles Gonzalez gave the poet credit for conscious intent in her code-switching. In Tafolla’s poetry, she wrote, “the disenfranchized speak for themselves their own language.” That remains true of all her writing.

*Curandera* was republished by Lalo Press (Santa Monica College) in 1987. Long out of print, the book continues to be taught even today. A 30th anniversary edition was brought out a year early (2012) by Wings Press when *Curandera* appeared among the list of books banned in Arizona.

Called a “world-class writer” by Alex Haley and a “pioneer of Chicana literature” by Ana Castillo, Tafolla has gone on to publish numerous works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction for both adults and children. Her work has appeared in over 300 anthologies and dozens of textbooks, at every level from elementary through college. She is also a sought-after speaker and has performed her one-woman show, “My Heart Speaks a Different Language,” all over the world.

Carmen Tafolla’s latest books include *Sonnets and Salsa*, a widely-praised collection of poetry now in its third printing; *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans: A Feast of Short Fiction*, winner of the Tomás Rivera Award for young adult fiction; and several books for children, including *That’s Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca’s Struggle for Justice*; *¡No Es Justo! La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia* (written with Sharyll Teneyuca), *Baby Coyote and the Old Woman / El Coyotito y la Viejita, What Can You Do With A Rebozo?* and others.

In September of 2012, a new collection of poetry, *Rebozos*, illustrated with paintings by Catalina Garcia, will be published by Wings Press in hardcover.
Questions for Jay Brandon
Dialogue with James R. Adair

Jay Brandon is the author of fifteen novels, most recently Milagro Lane and Running With The Dead, which Kirkus Reviews called “a brilliant entry in a series that just keeps getting better.” Executive Privilege involved a First Lady of the United States who wants a divorce, the first ever family law thriller. His tenth novel, After Image, was called “perhaps the finest legal thriller since Presumed Innocent.” Jay is also the author of one non-fiction book, Law and Liberty, a history of practicing law in San Antonio. He holds a master’s degree in writing from Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with John Barth, Edmund White, and Louise Erdrich. His books have been published in more than a dozen foreign countries and have been optioned for movies by Steven Spielberg, Bill Cosby, and Burt Reynolds, among others. Jay lives in San Antonio with his wife and three children.

James R. Adair: You’ve worked as an attorney for twenty-six years, so you’ve obviously seen aspects of the legal process both in the courtroom and behind the scenes that most people never see. What led you to start writing crime/legal novels?

Jay Brandon: I’m not a lawyer who started writing. I’m a writer who went to law school when I began to doubt I’d ever get a novel published, and I needed a Plan B. Then I sold my first two novels at the end of my second year of law school. The first two were paperback originals, and while the advance paid enough for me to finish law school, it wasn’t enough to make a living writing, luckily. Because if I’d become a full-time writer that early, I probably would have run out of material a long time ago. My first two novels were what I think of as domestic suspense, ordinary people threatened by some extraordinary menace. So was my third, Predator’s Waltz, probably the least-known of my novels.

Becoming a lawyer let me into a world that interests a lot of people but that seems mysterious, the backstage world of the courthouse. People see well-publicized cases like O.J. Simpson’s and wonder how a case gets from crime scene to trial. I had the idea for my first legal thriller during my first year of practicing law, when I’d barely been inside a courthouse. But by the time I started writing it I was working as a prosecutor. So the novel I was writing on weekends was full of authentic details. I loved working in the courthouse. There’s always something going on: romances, feuds, hidden emotions. Oh yes, and sending people to prison or death row. That first legal drama was Fade the Heat, which was nominated for an Edgar award and eventually published in more than a dozen foreign countries. And it was successful enough that I became a full-time writer for several years. I’m back practicing law now and still enjoy being behind the scenes in the courthouse.

What do you think about the academy’s distinction between “literary” fiction and “genre” fiction?

There is much less of a distinction now between literary and genre fiction. The most literary of writers like to cast their novels in some genre form, usually a mystery. At the same time, many genre writers write very well, well enough and with enough psychological insight for their novels to be considered literary. All serious writers want to write as well as they can and explore what it is to be human.

After I wrote two or three legal thrillers I began to feel trapped by the form: crime, trial, solution. But I soon realized that as long as I wrote in that form I could write about anything that interested me, and I have: family, race, love. The structure doesn’t matter much. Any novel has to have suspense, even if it’s only that question of “What’s going to happen?” that keeps readers reading.

Aside from yourself, who is your favorite writer of legal fiction? Why?

I don’t read legal thrillers. I practice law, often write about law, and in my spare time I don’t want to read about law. I did read Presumed Innocent and more recently its sequel, Innocent, more than twenty years apart, so I guess you’d have to say my favorite writer of legal thrillers is Scott Turow. Like me, he got a master’s degree in writing before going to law school, and was always a writer rather than a lawyer-turned-writer, and I think he remains a very good writer.

How have you developed as a writer since you wrote your first novel, Deadbolt, in 1985?

I was good at creating suspense from the beginning. When I was writing my first suspense novel, I was writing a very tense scene, on my typewriter in my parents’ dining room, when someone opened the front door and I jumped nearly a foot in the chair. When I was writing my second, my father was reading the pages next to my typewriter and told me to hurry up and finish the scene because he’d started reading it and wanted to know what happened next. So I’ve learned from early on I could do that. I think I’ve gotten better at creating characters, and particularly the relationships between characters. For five novels I wrote about Chris Sinclair and Anne Greenwald, who had a very interesting, evolving relationship. I also enjoyed the growing, changing relationship between Chris and the daughter he discovered he had when she was a teenager. Clarissa started out for me almost purely as a plot device, but became perhaps my favorite character in the series.

What do you like to read? Whom do you like to read?

I hardly read any current mysteries. The things I’m reading now are good examples: The Gathering, by Irish writer Anne Enright, which won the Man Booker Prize in 2007. It just caught my attention in the bookstore, particularly since it’s set in Ireland. I’m also reading The Black Mountain, one of the Nero Wolfe series by Rex Stout. I’d been looking for this novel for years and came across it in a Half Price Books in Dallas last weekend. Nero Wolfe is a very fat, brilliant detective who never leaves his Manhattan brownstone on business. His assistant Archie Goodwin, the wisecracking narrator of the series, goes out to gather evidence and interact with people and brings all the narrative back to Wolfe, who at the end of each book assembles all the suspects and tells them whodunit. But this book is different. Nero Wolfe’s best friend is murdered, and Wolfe returns to his native Montenegro to find the killers. So it’s an unusual entry in the series.
About once a decade I read a novel I really love. A few years ago it was Anna Karenina, which I was finally able to read because there’s a relatively new translation that makes it very readable. I loved it. Everything a novel should be, even with philosophical ruminations. Now I have a translation of War and Peace by the same couple, but I haven’t gotten up to tackling it yet.

My all-time favorite is Mark Twain. I’m reading, very slowly, Life on the Mississippi on my Kindle. I’d always seen commentators say it’s one of his best books, but I’ve never been able to read it before because it’s so disjointed and has no forward momentum of plot. It has good material, but he’ll thud into it a LONG description of, say, the cotton trade. Sort of reminiscent of Moby Dick: I’m now going to bring the narrative to a screeching halt to describe the whaling industry. Still, my favorite.

Putting people on trial a second time for the same crime (double jeopardy) is outlawed by the U.S. Constitution, but it has been permitted in the UK since the passage of the Criminal Justice Act of 2003 (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) and the Double Jeopardy Act of 2011 (Scotland). Should the U.S. consider doing away with double jeopardy in certain circumstances?

No. I don’t believe we should do away with the constitutional protection against double jeopardy, being tried twice for the same crime. The theory is that the government is much more powerful than private citizens, and should only get one shot at convicting one of us of a crime. There are already enough exceptions. For example, if conduct violates both a state and federal statute, you can be tried in either system or both. The federal government very seldom chooses to prosecute someone who’s been acquitted in state court, but it happens in really egregious circumstances. The police officers involved in the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles were acquitted in state court, but then tried again in federal court for violating Mr. King’s civil rights, and were found guilty. That exception is enough to protect the interests of justice.

What is your next writing project?

I am collaborating on a novel with my friend Joe Labatt, an idea I’ve had in mind for years, a ghost story set in Port Aransas. I thought it would be interesting to have ghosts in a sunny, summery setting. I wish I could tell you the title, but that’s the one thought I’ve gotten some detail wrong.

Milagro Lane was different because it was written so differently. It was being published in the Express-News as I wrote it, two short chapters a week. I decided to set it all over the city, so I did research of locations, such as the Malt House on the near west side. That was a bonus for me, getting to know my hometown even better. Fiction needs real locations. People often ask me if my characters are based on real people. No. But my fictional characters move through real places.

What’s your favorite lawyer joke?

I haven’t heard a good new lawyer joke in years. I’d stick with the classics, like, “What’s black and brown and looks good on a lawyer?” A Doberman.
Study Abroad in Urbino, Italy
Bernadette Andrea, Professor of English

For four weeks, nine students from five majors immersed themselves in the study of “Shakespeare’s England and Italy,” taught by Professor Bernadette Andrea for the 2012 Urbino Study Abroad Program, sponsored by the College of Liberal and Fine Arts at the University of Texas at San Antonio. This class covered the Renaissance best-seller, Baldassare Castiglione’s The Book of the Courtier, composed in Urbino in the early sixteenth century and translated into English by the end of the century; travelogues from Englishmen who ventured to Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century; and plays from the era set in Venice and Verona, including Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice and Romeo and Juliet.

To enrich our study of these works, we spent a long weekend in Venice and Verona, walking through the buildings, streets, and neighborhoods dramatized in Shakespeare’s plays. Students witnessed the start of Carnival in Venice, toured the synagogues in its historic Ghetto (where this term was first used), and left their letters for Juliet at her house in Verona. We also traveled to the medieval castles of Gradara and San Marino on a separate day trip. Our understanding of the literature of Shakespeare’s era gained incredible depth as we integrated into our class discussions reflections about our own experiences of traveling through these spaces. In the end, we all agreed with the seventeenth-century writer, Thomas Coryat, that “of all the pleasures in the world travel is . . . the sweetest and most delightfull.”

Upcoming Events
Sponsored by the Department of English

• April 20, 7:00-9:00 pm: An Evening with Geoffrey Chaucer, reading by Mark Allen
• May 17-20: El Mundo Zurdo 2012 (Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa Conference)
• May 24-June 14: Study Abroad in Spain
• June 3-28: African American Literatures and Cultures Institute
Preparing Jeffers’ “Vulture” before Class
Wendy Barker

I’m already predicting the reactions: Who cares “how beautiful he looked,” that bird gliding “on those great sails,” this guy is freaking weird if he wants to be shredded like that. So I’m wondering if I should mention what happened a year ago when I turned from a booth on wind power at our neighborhood’s GreenFest to face a Eurasian Eagle Owl on a man’s gloved arm. Stared right into me. I don’t know how long I froze, swept into that centered gaze. I guess tonight I could propose that maybe death Jeffers’ way wouldn’t be worse than the doctors’ slipping a gastric feeding tube into my father’s stomach, puncturing his lung, then jamming a ventilating tube down his throat, after which he never talked again. “iatrogenic mishaps,” such things are called, the complications, side effects of common medical procedures, like the euphemism “therapies” for the chiseling through bone, the screws in my mother’s knees, the implanted defibrillator that shocked her heart back to its familiar thud after it had wrenched to a stop. Finally she gave up eating, and then, even water. She’d never read the Dylan Thomas poem, never raged against the dying of the light. I know what Goethe said, but is it really light that leaves? I’ve read accounts of mystics who talk of luminosity, radiance that beckons, leads them to die in utter calm. That Eagle Owl, its clean ferocity—a moment nothing short of rapture. No wonder people say those birds connect us with the universe beyond. As if to scoff at all our needles, tubes, the tinkerings and machinery we submit to, hoping we’ll delay what has to come. But the vulture, Jeffers knew, feeds only on flesh no longer living, and, even then, a social bird, it calls to neighboring flocks to join in cleaning up the land, this bird that, for the Pueblo people, signaled purification. The Parsi Zoroastrians exposed their dead on “towers of silence,” a final act of charity, providing the birds with food that otherwise would go to waste. Cathartes Aura: “Golden Purifier”—in Buddhism, compassion. Which is spacious, patient, allowing for existing things to change. I remember reading that once a toddler was found on a mountain peak beside a vulture. He’d been missing for three days, but was smiling, utterly unhurt, though on his grimey shirt were pierced two sets of talon marks, a rip from a hooked beak. “What an enskyment,” says Jeffers. What a way to begin a life, or, I’m thinking, end.

Festschrift for Wendy Barker
Call for Submissions

You are invited to respond to this call for submissions for a Festschrift volume celebrating the career of Wendy Barker. Wendy has taught for over thirty years, mostly in our community here in San Antonio. She is an award-winning poet, scholar, essayist, and she has been a mentor to numerous writers who now live, work, and teach all over the country. She introduced the creative writing curriculum at UTSA and continues to work to help our program grow and flourish. All submissions should include name, mailing and email addresses. Digital files should be submitted to: Wendybarkerfestschrift.submishmash.com
All submissions due : May 1, 2012

Wendy Barker is Poet in Residence and Professor of English at UTSA. She is the author of Nothing Between Us: The Berkeley Years, a novel in prose poems (Del SolPress, 2009) and numerous collections of poetry, including Poems from Paradise (2005), Way of Whiteness (2000), Let the Ice Speak (1991), and Winter Chickens (1990), as well as three chapbooks, Eve Remembers (1996), Between Frames (2006), and Things of the Weather (2009).
Reviews & Books

Steve Jobs
by Walter Isaacson
Reviewed by Maria Oddo

Steve Jobs is an authorized biography that chronicles the life of the Apple, Inc., chairman and co-founder and examines the Silicon Valley in the 20th and 21st centuries. The normally secretive Jobs authorized this biography, fully aware that it would reveal some unsavory details about his life and personality.

One might think that since Jobs was given up for adoption, his relentless and obsessive pursuits sprouted from a subconscious need for acceptance from his biological parents. Isaacson points out; however, that his obsessive pursuits may have been greatly influenced by his adoptive father, who instilled in him a love of mechanics and electronics, as well as pride in meticulous execution.

Isaacson confirms the tales of Jobs’ volatile managerial style and chronicles in great detail his often complicated professional relationships (patent litigations, political positioning, etc.). He discloses Jobs’ loathsome bullying techniques (referred to as his “reality distortion field”), but does so in a way that suggests that this was how Jobs got the most out of those around him.

Jobs was a conflicted and multifaceted individual; he dabbled in LSD, often tried fad cleansing diets (one fruitarian diet inspired the “Apple” name), and insisted on daily meditation. He was notorious for personal hygiene issues (often cleansing his feet in a toilet bowl), gave presentations perched atop a conference table in the lotus position, and, contrary to his volatile personality and millionaire status, was a follower of Zen Buddhism. “His Zen awareness was not accompanied by an excess of calm, peace of mind or interpersonal mellowness,” notes Isaacson. He was against consumer satisfaction surveys and instead made his business and design decisions based on his own intuition. Isaacson points out that Jobs’ true talents “lie at the intersection of artistry and engineering.” With an uncanny ability to predict consumer needs and move his team to create and deliver those needs in a clean design and package, Jobs became an icon.

Jobs was a complicated, obsessive, and often madddening individual; after reading his bio, however, one feels that his genius justifies his behavior, or at least makes it permissible. What Isaacson gently delivers in this well-written, easy to read biography, is great perspective on this 21st-century icon who revolutionized personal computing.

Amazon’s Assault on Intellectual Freedom
Bryce Milligan

There is an undeclared war going on in the United States that threatens the linchpins of American intellectual freedom. In a statement worthy of Cassandra, Noah Davis wrote in a Business Insider post last October, “Amazon is coming for the book publishing industry. And not just the e-book world, either.” When titans battle, it is tempting to think that there will be no local impact. In this case, that’s dead wrong. Amazon’s recent actions have already cut the sales of the small press I run by 40 percent. Jeff Bezos could not care less.

One recent battle in Amazon’s larger war has pitted it against a diverse group of writers, small publishers, university presses, and independent distributors. It is a classic David-and-Goliath encounter. As in that story, however, this is more than just pitting the powerful against the powerless. In this case, the underdogs have the ideas, and ideas are always where the ultimate power lies.

Wings Press (San Antonio, Texas) is one of the several hundred independent publishers and university presses distributed by the Independent Publishers Group (IPG), the second largest book distributor in the country, but still only a medium-sized dolphin in a sea of killer whales. In late February, IPG’s contract with Amazon.com was due to be renegotiated. Terms that had been generally accepted across the industry were suddenly not good enough for Amazon, which demanded discounts and practices that IPG—and all of its client publishers—could only have accepted at a loss. Yes, that does mean what it sounds like: to do business with Amazon would mean reducing the profit margin to the point of often losing money on every book or eBook sold.

IPG refused to accept the draconian terms and sought to negotiate further. In what can only be seen as a move to punish IPG for its desire to remain relevant and healthy, Amazon refused to negotiate and pulled the plug on all the Kindle eBooks distributed by IPG, marking them as “unavailable.”

To read the entire article, please visit http://www.wingspress.com/author.cfm/124/Amazon-Article/.

The Garden of Milk and Wine
by Mo H Saidi
Reviewed by James R. Adair

A fanciful heavenly tribunal, a neighborhood street near an Iranian bakery, a rural cemetery, a lecture hall in a busy American hospital, a cave in the Texas Hill Country after an apocalypse—these are some of the settings for Mo Saidi’s magical collection of short stories, The Garden of Milk and Wine. Saidi draws on his experience as an adolescent in Iran, a medical student in New Jersey, and a doctor in San Antonio to weave a tapestry of humor, tragedy, and endurance that offers both originality and familiarity. Several stories deal with the collision between traditional faith (Islamic) and the modern world. Others offer a glimpse of the corridors and treatment rooms from the unique perspective of the physician.

Although most of the stories are starkly realistic, two employ large doses of the fantastic. “Reconstructing Joe Adams” is a humorous piece in which two angelic beings (godlings) lead a distinguished jury—with Rumi as the headliner—in the post-mortem evaluation of the good and bad deeds of a man who not coincidentally bears the name of the first human to inhabit the planet, according to the Quran (and the Bible). “Sunset Mirage” begins as a mystery involving a dead body found in a vacant lot and evolves into a ghost story with a number of startling twists.

One of my favorites is “Rotation,” the story of three male Iranian medical students who are all in love with the same female medical student, who is being courted by yet another med student. In their mutual quest to gain her favor, they desecrate...


The Swerve
by Stephen Greenblatt
Reviewed by James R. Adair

When the great Italian poet Petrarch coined the term “Dark Ages,” disparagingly referring to the time between the classical period and the new era that was emerging in his own day, he lamented the loss of culture and the beauty of language that his ancestors had allowed to slip away, robbing “posterity of its ancestral heritage.” Living in the first half of the fourteenth century, Petrarch and his contemporaries were introduced to a trove of classical literature that had recently come to the attention of scholars and humanists, having been preserved largely in monastery libraries. Stephen Greenblatt tells the story of the discovery of one such long lost work by a book hunter whose name is little known today, but whose discovery, argues Greenblatt, set the stage for the transformation of the world from medieval to modern.

Poggio Bracciolini was an avid humanist, a scribe with notably beautiful handwriting, and secretary to the Pisan pope John XXIII. After his tenure as papal secretary came to an abrupt end at the Council of Constance—which deposed Pope John and his two rivals, thus ending the Western Schism of the Papacy—Poggio found himself suddenly unemployed. The situation was not a complete disaster, for it gave him the opportunity to do something he loved, search for lost works of antiquity. On one of those trips in 1417, he came to a monastery somewhere in southern Germany, and on the shelves of its library he discovered a copy of De rerum natura, On the Nature of Things. This work, of which only the title had survived intact into Poggio’s day, contained the teaching of the Roman philosopher Lucretius, the leading first century B.C.E. proponent of the teachings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, whose works had been almost totally lost—well, suppressed rather than lost.

Epicureanism was one of the leading schools of thought in the Greco-Roman world, but with the advent of Christianity its influence waned, and its representative works were neglected or worse, because they were seen as antithetic to the Christian faith. On the Nature of Things presents some of those controversial ideas: all things are made of invisible, indivisible particles (a-tom = un-cuttable); matter is eternal; the universe has no creator or designer; nature ceaselessly experiments; humans are not unique; the soul dies; there is no afterlife; religions are invariably cruel; the highest goal of human life is the enhancement of pleasure and the reduction of pain. One notable aspect of Lucretius’ interpretation of Epicurus involves the notion that the atoms that constitute matter tend to move in predictable ways, but sometimes they “swerve” just slightly from their expected courses, giving rise to variation, collisions, and ultimately free will. Moderns would call this idea “chaos.”

Greenblatt’s discussion of the lives of Poggio and his contemporaries as the struggle to loose the bonds of tradition and rediscover the glories of the past is both informative and entertaining. Particularly interesting is his reconstruction of the influence of On the Nature of Things in the decades and centuries after its discovery, first in Italy, then spreading throughout Europe as far as England, where it appears in the works of Spencer, Donne, Bacon, and Shakespeare. Lucretius eventually crossed the Atlantic and found a proponent in Thomas Jefferson, who counted himself an Epicurean. Certainly the ideas of Lucretius were not accepted by all, but “these subversive, Lucretian thoughts percolated and surfaced wherever the Renaissance imagination was at its most alive and intense” (220).

Because The Swerve is the story of the discovery of one particular ancient work, one may forgive Greenblatt if he somewhat exaggerates its role in the creation of the modern world. Surely other discoveries and inventions—the printing press, the Americas, the works of Plato and Homer in Greek—did as much to transform the world as On the Nature of Things did. His monochromatic representation of medieval Christianity, in which “the pursuit of pain triumphed over the pursuit of pleasure” (103), is less easy to overlook. That many Christian writers, beginning with Tertullian in the late second century, advocated harsh asceticism is unquestionably true, but the verse “Jesus wept” (from the Gospel of John, not Luke, p. 105) hardly summed up the character of Jesus for ordinary Christians (as opposed to those who abandoned society to live in the desert or sit on pillars), who would also have remembered that Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding festival.

Despite these critiques, however, Greenblatt’s central thesis is sound. The erstwhile papal secretary and part-time book hunter’s discovery on the shelf of a monastic library did send a tremor through the medieval world, a swerve that went to its very foundations. The words of Lucretius and the ideas of Epicurus permeated Renaissance Europe, altering the course of history in a subtle but profound way. The contemporary philosopher George Santanyana said that one idea in particular, the concept of the “ceaseless mutation of forms composed of indestructible substances” was “the greatest thought that mankind has ever hit upon” (186; cf. the review of the Darwin exhibit at the Witte Museum on p. 15 of this issue of Voices). Greenblatt’s recounting of the discovery of Poggio Bracciolini, better known in his day as the author of a history of Florence than as the man who discovered the lost masterpiece of Lucretius, is both enjoyable and thought-provoking.

Review of The Garden of Milk and Wine, continued from p. 10

a grave, disturb a mullah addicted to pornography, and all meet up several years later at a class reunion in New York City. Other favorites are “The Blue Window,” a vignette of youthful ruminations about love, and “Playing Chess in the Mosque,” a piece of flash fiction about a boy who takes up soccer in order to play chess.

The Garden of Milk and Wine is suffused with the poetry of Rumi, the worldview of Islam, the modern science of medicine, and the traditions of an ancient country that hearken back to Cyrus the Great, Zoroaster, and the unknown inventor of the game of Shahs, chess. Above all, it is a work of aesthetic delight. As Rumi said, “Judge a moth by the beauty of its candle.” The reader attracted to the flame of this elegant little volume will be amply rewarded.
The City of San Antonio is introducing the first-ever poet laureate of our great city. The San Antonio poet laureate is an honorary position whose role is to promote the literary arts and literacy within the community and create a greater appreciation of the poetic arts through the reading and writing of poetry. The individual selected will serve a two-year term and receive an honorarium of $3,000 per year.

The title “poet laureate” dates back to the ancient Greeks and refers to the tradition of placing a laurel wreath on the head as recognition for significant achievements in literature, the arts, and public life. During the Renaissance, Petrarch was crowned poet laureate of Rome in 1341, the first person so honored in a thousand years. The United States poet laureate was established in 1937. Many U.S. cities such as San Francisco, Denver, and Santa Fe currently have a poet laureate program. Texas has appointed a poet laureate since 1992, but no major Texas city currently appoints a poet laureate. With the implementation of this program, San Antonio will be the first.

The Nominee:
Carol Coffee Reposa

Carol Coffee Reposa was born in 1943 and has lived in Austin and mostly in San Antonio for the last 43 years. After attending the University of Texas in Austin, she graduated with a Master’s degree in English and moved to San Antonio in 1969. A poet through and through, she enhanced her writing skills by taking postgraduate writing courses at UTSA and Trinity University before becoming a faculty member at San Antonio College, where she taught English literature and creative writing for over thirty years. A poet, educator, community enthusiast, and a dedicated citizen, she considers herself a proud San Antonian.

Carol has been a vital member of San Antonio literary community, both as a distinguished teacher of English and creative writing, and as a remarkable poet. As we read in her impressive résumé, she has published several collections of poetry; been published in numerous regional, state, and national literary journals and anthologies; has taught courses at Gemini Ink; has participated in numerous poetry workshops; and has supported literary organizations.

I first met her some years ago at the Third Monday Writers Group monthly meeting at Bryce Milligan’s home and began to peruse her remarkable poetry. Her writings about San Antonio reflect a deep understanding of the city’s past and present and its cultural importance, its peaceful demeanor. In the poem, “New Year’s Eve, San Antonio,” she celebrates the New Year with her neighbors: “Just before midnight / And the new year’s rowdy birth / We stumble into the street, / Champagne glasses in our hands / To herald the delivery.”

Her mature and cerebral poetic prowess and her appreciation of various artistic and cultural endeavors of our community make Carol a great representative of our city, for she places a great value on San Antonio’s social and ethnic milieu and praises the contribution of all literary elements, which produce the magnificent tome of poetry in San Antonio. Carol’s poetry, teaching involvements, and generous participatory approach to community affairs has made her an exemplary practitioner of San Antonio poetry. As an ambassador of our community, she will speak with a delicate tongue and reveal the treasures that we hold dear but are in need of introduction to the world.

The Laureate:
Carmen Tafolla

The first official Poet Laureate of the City of San Antonio is internationally acclaimed Chicana writer and educator Carmen Tafolla. A faculty member at the University of Texas at San Antonio, she is the author of five books of poetry, one volume of nonfiction, seven screenplays, and numerous short stories, academic articles, and children’s books. Her work has appeared in more than forty anthologies, including the Norton Anthology of Latino Literature (2003), Infinite Divisions (1993), and After Aztlán: Latino Poets of the Nineties (1992). She has received numerous awards, including first prize in the poetry division of the National Chicano Literary Contest, UC Irvine, for Sonnets to Human Beings (1987), which was translated into German and published as a dual-language edition in 1992. Since the mid-1970s, she has presented keynotes, speeches, and training seminars to more than two hundred universities, school districts, corporations, and professional organizations. Since 1990, she has performed her one-woman show With Our Very Own Names—a dramatic performance incorporating the voices of elderly women, first graders, rebellious teens, janitors, retired veterans, and young professionals—more than one hundred times throughout the United States, Europe, and Mexico. Tafolla has been recognized by the National Association for Chicano Studies for her outstanding contributions to the arts and academia. Her papers and early works are archived in the Latin American Collection at the University of Texas, Benson.

Tafolla’s writing and professional career reflect a deep and ongoing commitment to the synthesis of education, creativity, and social justice. She has worked with students at alternative high schools and middle schools, editing numerous anthologies of their writing, leading workshops in creative writing for children in the colonies of south Texas and Reynosa, as well as teaching a movie-making class for youth. She and her husband, Ernesto Bernal, developed Camino School, a multicultural and multilingual school for gifted and creative children in San Antonio, Texas.

Tafolla’s energetic cultural activism draws on a rich sense of cultural tradition and identity articulated in her writing. From her earliest published work, Get Your Tortillas Together (1976), to her collection of poems Sonnets and Salsa (2001), Tafolla explores the contours of the various cultural and literary traditions that have shaped her poetic voice. Much has been made of her work’s cultural, regional, and historic specificity, especially its attention to Chicana cultural identity and its embodiment in familia, in community, and in individual speakers. Indeed, critics such as Rosaura Sánchez and Ernesto Padilla have commented extensively on the development of a Chicana, and more specifically a Tejana, poetic voice in Tafolla’s oeuvre.
Now it so happened that on one occasion the princess’ golden ball did not fall into the little hand that she was holding up for it, but on the ground beyond, and rolled straight into the water. The King’s daughter followed it with her eyes, but it vanished, and the well was so deep that the bottom could not be seen. At this she began to cry, and cried louder and louder, and could not be comforted.

“Be quiet and do not weep,” answered a frog. “I can help you, but what will you give me if I bring your plaything up again?”

“Whatever you will have, dear frog,” said she, “my clothes, my pears and jewels, and even the golden crown that I am wearing.”

The frog answered, “I do not care for your clothes, your pears and jewels, nor your golden crown; but if you will love me and let me be your companion and playfellow, and sit by you at your little table, and eat off your golden plate, and drink out of your little cup, and sleep in your little bed—if you will promise me this, I will go down below and bring you your golden ball.”

When the frog had received his promise, he put his head into the water and sank down, and in a short while came swimming up again with the ball in his mouth, and threw it on the grass. The King’s daughter was so delighted to see her pretty plaything once more, she picked it up and ran away with it.

“Wait, wait,” said the frog. “Take me with you.”

The fairy tale of the Frog King begins with the initial description of the happy little princess, playing with her golden ball, tossing it into the air and being admired by everyone. All seems well. But then comes the turning point in the tale, when the action shifts. The ball is lost in the well.

We noted earlier that the golden ball is a symbolic expression of the active principle in the psyche that moves us and guides us towards wholeness. Now in our story it falls on the ground and rolls straight into the water. It sinks into the deepest depths of the well. As water symbolizes the unconscious, we know that the ball has rolled right into the transformative energies of the underworld, where it will take a particular skill to be retrieved.

One striking parallel to this scene is the journey of the Egyptian sun god Re through the waters of the underworld. Each evening the sun god—himself a golden ball!—sinks into the waters on the western horizon, travels through the waters of the underworld on a royal barque, and is then reborn in the east, ultimately transformed in the process.

Key here is the idea that the sun god is tired and in need of renewal at the end of the day as he descends into the water. Psychologically this is an apt description of what happens to our conscious ego each evening as we descend into sleep. Traveling through the realm of the dream, our conscious attitude can be renewed and healed for the coming day.

And it is interesting that the sun god encounters a serpent, Apopis, midway in the journey, who initially is a danger, but who ultimately leads the barque of the sun god safely through the underworld as a guide and protector. There is a certain parallel between the roles of the snake and the frog in these stories.

Of course the frog is obviously not a snake, but it does share with the snake some important psychological meanings. Most importantly, they both are symbolic of renewal and resurrection, and both are at home in the watery depths. Also both bring the golden ball back from those depths.

One might think of the journey of the princess’ golden ball, going down into the depths and coming back again, as a special version of this transformative cycle. We know from the story, though, that all is not finished, for the frog now wants to be the close companion to the princess.

As an animal, the frog represents nature and the instinctual life, including sexuality. These are elements that a young princess will need to integrate for her eventual wholeness. She will need to allow the frog to sit with her, eat off her plate, sleep in her bed. She will need to learn to be at home with the frog, with nature, with her instincts.

But the frog is more than nature and sexuality. When the princess asks for his help, he ultimately asks in return that she will love him. There is a bit of the “Beauty and the Beast” in this motif, for the “ugly old watersplasher” wants to be loved and cared for by the princess. This is the element of eros, which has its dark and mysterious and contradictory and even repugnant aspects, and which mutually transforms those who remain faithful to its demands. Both will be changed in the encounter.

Finally, though, the frog is still more than sexuality, nature, and eros. He can dive into the depths of the waters and retrieve the golden ball! The frog is the instinct for penetrating into the depths of one’s experience for inner meaning and value. He has the capacity to plumb the depths of the unconscious and connect with the numinous and the divine. As such, he symbolizes an aspect of the religious instinct within the psyche.

As a simple example of this, every time we recognize a poem in the midst of our everyday experience, we have been prompted by the frog instinct. “Aha! There is a poem in this!”

When we think about the frog’s request—that the princess bring him to sit with her, to eat off her plate, to sleep in her bed—we get some idea of what he is asking. He wants her to include this poetic attitude—a penetrating affinity for the symbolic—in her every waking moment, and then into her bed where he can retrieve the meanings of her dreams while she sleeps.

It is no accident, I am sure, that this tale is often the first listed in the collection of the Grimms’ fairy tales. It prepares the reader of the tales that follow for the challenges and rewards of embracing a symbolic attitude towards life, and a love for its deepest and darkest mysteries. In the next installment, we will examine the particular challenge and rewards of loving this special frog.
The Last of the Southern Natives

The Disappearance of the Yamana People

Adapted from The People’s Almanac, Wikipedia, and Ushuaia Museum Website

At the End of the World Museum in Ushuaia, Argentina, a whole floor is dedicated to an exhibition of the Yamana Indians who became extinct in the eighteenth century. The Yamana were an incredible people, one of the most interesting indigenous cultures in the region. The museum is small, simple, and inexpensive but very informative about this amazing culture.

The Yamana Indians did not wear clothes until their contact with Europeans. They were able to survive the harsh climate because they kept warm by huddling around small fires when they could. They even kept small fires in their boats to stay warm. In fact, the name of the island where they lived, Tierra del Fuego or “land of fire,” is a name given to the island cluster by European explorers who saw all the fires at night as they passed by in their ships.

The Yamana were an industrious people. Using tree bark, as seen in the photo, they built sturdy canoes that could sail long distances and made use of rock formations to shelter themselves from the constant wind and wetness and to protect themselves from the freezing temperatures. They covered themselves in animal grease for warmth, and over time they had evolved significantly higher metabolisms than average humans, allowing them to generate more internal body heat.

Their natural resting position was a deep squatting position, which reduced their surface area and so helped them to conserve heat. A drawing of a Yamana man next to a European ship, the HMS Beagle, made by artist Conrad Martens during a visit to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America, suggests that the Yamana people were shorter than five feet, had large heads and torsos and long hands but short legs.

When Europeans, Chileans, and Argentinians invaded and settled on these islands in the mid-19th century, they brought with them diseases such as measles and smallpox, for which the Yamana had no immunity. The Yamana population was devastated by the diseases, and their numbers were reduced from several thousand in the 19th century to hundreds in the 20th century, and to none by the turn of the 21st century.

The Yamana were coast-dwellers, for the coast provided fish, sea birds, seals, and sometimes also beached whales for sustenance. They practiced a nomadic lifestyle and lacked permanent shelters. They regularly changed their camping places, traveling by canoe. For this reason they gained expertise and became excellent canoe builders.

They were spiritual people who revered the hummingbird, believed in the myths of the big albatross and the sea lion and his human wife, and a distinctive myth about the origin of death.

Yamanas were thought to be physically, culturally, and linguistically distinct from other Native Americans. Some researchers suggest they may be the descendants of Australian Aborigines who colonized the area before the arrival of mongoloid Amerindians. Further credibility is lent to this idea by the existence of an ethnically distinct population elsewhere in South America who also practiced body painting and rock art similar to that of Australian Aborigines. Here is a picture of a small group of Yamanas in 1920.

Due to the unfortunate intrusion of modern man and his devastating imports, there are today no colonies of Yamana people in Ushuaia or in the neighboring islands. In the last national census of Chile in 2002, however, 1,270 people identified themselves as Yamana, but mostly as genetically mixed with other people.

San Antonio Symphony Thrives

With the Highly Successful Beethoven Festival

Voices de la Luna congratulates Sebastian Lang-Lessing who was appointed Music Director of the San Antonio Symphony in February 2010, for the highly successful Beethoven Festival in January–March 2012. Hailed by both audiences and critics, German conductor Sebastian Lang-Lessing is among the most talented and exciting artists of his generation. His dynamic performances have garnered praise from the international press. We are hoping for another successful festival from the San Antonio Symphony in 2013.

The Remaining 2012 Season Performances

Fiesta POPS
April 20, 2012, to April 21, 2012

Tall Tales: Music Inspired by Stories
May 1, 2012

Mozart in Old Style

Star Wars and Other Space Odysseys
May 18, 2012, to May 19, 2012

Paint to Music: Tall Tales - Music Inspired by Stories
May 20, 2012

Alondra Conducts Copland

Bruckner Blockbuster
June 1, 2012, to June 2, 2012

For more information, please visit http://www.sasymphony.org.
In his 1996 book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, Daniel C. Dennett called Charles Darwin's notion of descent with modification through natural selection “the single best idea anyone has ever had.” The A&E Network rated Darwin as the fourth most influential person of the second millennium, and the most influential of the nineteenth century. His evolutionary—and revolutionary—idea is the foundational theory in biology, and it has enhanced our understanding of the web of life, spurred the development of new approaches to medicine and medical care, and inspired the Human Genome Project. The Witte Museum, in conjunction with the American Museum of Natural History, the Field Museum, and others, has assembled an impressive array of specimens from Darwin’s voyage on the *Beagle*, full and partial skeletons, fossils, and other items to illustrate Darwin’s life and his impact on the modern understanding of the nature of living things.

As a child, Darwin was fascinated with the variety and similarity of living things, and he was a collector of bird eggs, sea shells, and beetles. On one occasion when he was out collecting beetles, he tore a piece of bark off a tree and saw two rare specimens. He grabbed one with each hand, but when he saw a third, different, species, he popped the beetle in his right hand into his mouth for safekeeping. Unfortunately, that beetle emitted an “intensely acrid fluid” that forced him to spit out his captive, and he ended up losing all three specimens.

At sixteen he was sent to the University of Edinburgh to study medicine, but he had little interest in the subject, preferring the study of natural history. After three years he moved to Cambridge to study to become a parson, but he found himself more taken with botany than of theology. In 1831, at the age of twenty-two, he accepted the post of naturalist aboard the *Beagle*, which was bound for a five-year trip of discovery around the world, with a focus on South America. Darwin collected numerous plant and animal specimens, as well as fossils from a large number of extinct animals. His curiosity was piqued by his observation of the similarities between extinct animals and living animals, which he took to be their descendants. His exploration of the Galápagos Islands afforded him a different perspective, for now he observed the similarities and differences among species of birds and lizards on different islands.

Darwin was by no means the first person to believe in the mutability of species. His grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had written on the subject, as had other notable naturalists such as Lamarck and Saint-Hilaire, but Darwin grew increasingly dissatisfied with their explanation of how evolution occurred (passing on acquired traits). While on board the *Beagle*, Darwin read the recently published *Principles of Geology* by Charles Lyell, which argued for an immensely old earth. Darwin saw that an earth that was millions or billions rather than only thousands of years old would allow species to develop slowly over time, an idea supported by his reading of the fossil record. After the triumphant return of the *Beagle* to England—Darwin had been regularly sending back the specimens he was collecting, to the delight of the populace—he read another book that greatly influenced him, Malthus’s *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, which opined that human populations grew or shrank in response to such factors as famine and disease. Malthus provided the key that allowed Darwin to make sense of the observations he had made aboard the *Beagle* and after his return to England: external pressures favor the survival of members of a population that are better adapted to the environment, while less well adapted individuals die and fail to reproduce. The idea of natural selection was born.

One large room in *Darwin* allows observers to examine Darwin’s three insights into how living species are related to other species: (1) to extinct species from the same region; (2) to other species living nearby; and (3) to species living on isolated islands.

Although Darwin first committed his ideas concerning natural selection to paper as early as 1842, sharing it with trusted friends, he declined to publish them until he received a letter from fellow naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace in 1858, laying out a similar theory. Darwin presented his own ideas and Wallace’s at a subsequent meeting of the Linnean Society of London, and he rushed to finish the book he had been working on for twenty years, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

Darwin delayed publishing his ideas because of concerns about how the religious establishment of England would receive them. He pointedly omitted any references to humans as part of the evolutionary scheme in *Origin*, but twelve years later he published *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, which made explicit his view that human beings were the product of evolution, just as all other species are. His idea of natural selection as the mechanism for evolution was widely accepted by many scientists almost immediately, and by most within a few years. It was also accepted by many, but not all, in the church.

The ongoing debate over Darwin’s theory of evolution, and its rejection by many in the Christian community, is a phenomenon that is largely localized to the United States. The curators of the Witte exhibit, recognizing this fact, have dedicated space near the exit to the exhibit to address the religious controversy. The scientific notion of a theory is discussed (it is not merely an educated guess, but a well-supported model that explains all known facts), and both traditional creationism and intelligent design creationism are dealt with briefly and dismissed as unscientific. It is particularly noteworthy that prominent Christian evolutionary biologists such as Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome Project, and Kenneth Miller, author of *Finding Darwin’s God*, are chosen—along with others—to state the case for evolution and against creationism.

Although the focus is on Darwin’s ideas about evolution, other aspects of his life are also on display, from a reconstruction of his study to two lists he drew up when considering the pros and cons of getting married. One item on the Not Marry list caught my attention: “less money for books &c.” Walking through *Darwin* and perusing the items in the display cases will take most people an hour or two—avid museum lovers will want to take longer—and it is well worth the time. The exhibit offers a concise illustration of the closing words of Darwin’s magnum opus: “From so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”
Poetry & Art Therapy

Making Art, Making Meaning: What Is Art For?
Maripat Munley

This column is based upon my recent staff development presentation at Haven for Hope. It outlines basic information about creativity and art-making that may be meaningful to readers, writers and the creators of this magazine. Some information may be new, but other data here will ring true to your own experience.

The key to understanding the core tenets of the column title are the answers to these questions: 1. What is creativity? 2. Why do we all have the urge to create? 3. What happens physiologically and psychobiologically when we create art in any form? 4. What is art for anyway? 5. How can we make meaning from art?

What Is Creativity?
In Marie Coombs’ book Hidden Yet Revealed, she tells us that “Creativity expression denotes the use of word, image, sound, or movement in order for name to ourselves and to communicate to other persons something of our experience of mystery hidden yet revealed, both within ourselves and within the world around us.” This is good counsel for us as it links the urge to create to its expression in something tangible such as a poem, painting, photo or other outcome of our inner push to mark life experience or simply to reveal what is beautiful to us.

Why Do We Have the Urge to Create?
Ellen Dissanayake, an ethnologist, has examined the “urge to create” for many years and shared her findings in articles, interviews, and books such as, What Is Art For? (1988) and Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why (1995). She reports that humans making art across eons demonstrate that the behavior has been a species trait. Therefore, it is a biological need for several reasons: 1. Making art makes us feel good. Consequently, we are positively inclined. 2. Humans spent increased time and increased effort making art (often to the exclusion of other activities such as those related to basic physical needs). 3. Frivolous pastimes were not chosen over and over across human history. The conclusion: the urge to create is a universal, biological, human need confirmed across time. Consider the cave paintings of Lascaux, the art of the mentally ill, the passion of the world’s great artists, Native American annual hunt history paintings, and psychobiologically when we create art in any form? 4. What is art for anyway? 5. How can we make meaning from art?

What Happens Physiologically When We Create Art in Any Form?
Visual artists tell us how time passes unnoticeably and how deeply engaged they are when they create. Poets tell us sometimes a poem literally writes itself. It is clear that “something” is happening physically. Certainly dancers are physically changed both interiorly and exteriorly while simultaneously introducing and interpreting image(s) via form and music. The concept of eliciting the relaxation response versus the fight or flight response is one reason change occurs during creative activity. It has been discussed in this column before. The following chart provides a brief review.

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Other researchers have taught us that when we meditate, including using art to meditate, there are actual changes in our brains. At the risk of oversimplification, here is a brief summary taken from How God Changes the Brain, the 2009 breakthrough book by neuroscientist A. Newberg, MD, and psychologist M.R. Waldman. Using brain scans, the researchers visually documented which parts of the brain are activated or slowed down during various activities. This exploration can tell us something about how and why we change physically. During meditation the anterior cingulate (one part of the brain) becomes more active, stimulating the amygdala (another part of the brain) to slow down. The amygdala, along with other brain structures is responsible for the fight or flight response. When amygdala activity slows, physical vital signs (pulse and respirations) decrease and the relaxation response occurs naturally. This evidence, added to what ethnologists are saying, helps us understand something about what may be happening physiologically when we are creative. We achieve an altered state and change our energies. Scientists are in the early stages of learning more about creativity and physiology.

What Happens Psychologically When We Create Art in Any Form?
Making art affects us psychologically. This is true whether it is creating a visual image physically present or one elicited through poetry or dance. Here are some examples. Making art is a way of knowing. Think dream interpretation through art and poetry or the relating of a memorable experience. Images have power. Consider the power of advertising or how photographs recall our travels. Images have layers of meaning and can inform us. Think using color or words to tell a story while simultaneously expressing feelings related to the experience. Images touch our interior selves. Think the photos of national disasters, painting and poetry about the inner experience of drug-induced tripping, or expressing meditation experience in poetry or image.

Art is a way of knowing.
The following poem by Voices editor Jim Brandenburg is a response and an assist to interpreting his dream about his brother who was killed in Vietnam in 1968.

A Return of My Brother

All these years you were with me
In that hidden place,
today you appear
man in green
arriving
in a Black Limousine
you disembark your destiny
leap forward from our past
as if never gone
more grown up now,
you embrace me
and we walk arm in arm
into this place of worship
composed of white stone
we dip our hands in holy water
something about siblings
fusion into self
entering the land of the dead
crossing the threshold
into that sacred space

Images have power.
The image below, photographed by my husband, Tom, at Yellowstone National Park, empowers us as a couple to re-experience the celebration of our 45th wedding anniversary. There, we shared memories of our life together and the feelings associated with 45 years of marriage. The snapshot ignites a life review so meaningful to the two of us that it is now a giclee print-to-canvas that hangs in our home.

Images have layers of meaning and can inform us.
While drawing a mandala (circular drawing), an old friend found a pinwheel in her image. Using metaphor, she related the fickle, stop-start of pinwheels to the freeze, stop-start walking symptomatic of her experience of Parkinson’s disease. This encouraged her to use the image to help her mitigate the unexpected stop-start of her gait by helping her think how to step. Simultaneously, she found the image calming. Other layers of meaning surfaced through her color interpretation and investigation of the meaning of her symbols (spirals, tear shapes and circles).

Images touch our inner selves.
Members living at Haven for Hope use scribble drawings to concretize their experience of meditating. It is an example of how images touch our inner selves and reflect information back to us. She found meaning in the words, colors, and symbols in the image that helped her express her meditation experience. The image is a permanent, meaningful record that can be used for future reflection.

Art makes meaning.
Now, how can we make meaning from our creative art making? Keep in mind that images come not only from visual art making but from poetry, dance, or any other art form. In addition to making meaning from observing our process of making art in any form, we can discover meaning by finding answers to these questions. What are my personal associations to the image as a whole or parts of the image? What do the symbols in the image mean (use an encyclopedia of symbols or just Google the symbol)? What is the metaphorical or archetypal meaning of the images or symbols? Is there a daily life connection to the image created? What do the colors symbolize? Bear in mind that statistically colors do not mean the same thing to everyone, either culturally or personally. The most important thing about meaning making is what the image or symbol means to the artist. While these questions are not the only methods for making meaning from our images, they do help us to understand that making art and gathering meaning from it is NOT an impossible task. It can be very illuminating and rewarding.

What is art for?
Making art, making meaning, and examining what art is for fascinate contemporary researchers. Ethnologists acknowledge that humans universally need art and that this phenomenon is biological. Philosophers throughout time have recognized this need. Aristotle (384-322 BC) wrote: “It is the artist within us who communicates our own mythology through our thoughts and feelings as expressed in paintings, sculpture, writing, music and dance.”

Undoubtedly, making art in any form satisfies and heals in many ways, including but not limited to: recreation, aesthetic beauty, adornment, stress relief, healing, understanding suffering, easing chronic pain, reminiscence, life review, and spiritual exploration. And while we can learn much about ourselves by observing our own ways of making art, maybe the greatest benefit of making art is simply the joy of creating.
Select Poems—Part I
Youth Poems

All youth poems in this issue are from students at the Winston School in San Antonio.

People Vanishing
Cory Weinberg

People in life vanish as fast as 1 2 3,
So take every chance you get with them,
Learn as much as you can from them,
Laugh to make the hard times fun with them.
Think the good not the bad with them,
Never take them for granted—
Love every second with them.

Door Number 21
Josh Perez

The streams fly
With a glow of a glassy prism
A day to remember
The journey to the flash starts at the click
Prints grow shallower as the specks stir
Toxins take full effect
The big bang reborn would be the equivalent
Streams of wisps flow down to erode
You should have known what lies behind door number 21

I Borrowed
Samantha Morale

I borrowed
your favorite CD.
I know I should have asked.
This is just to say:
I will return it soon,
when you least expect it.

See All the Pretty Faces
Will Gallogly

See all the pretty faces, as they stare blankly at you. See the pretty faces as they blankly stare at you, see all the pretty blank faces as they stare blankly see all the blank faces as they stare at you. Now no one can stare blankly.

Raindrops
Samantha Morale

Raindrops fall
Softly to the ground.
I call out
To you.
You turn
And smile at me.
Why must it be so hard
To let the tears fall?
I want to tell you,
But I can’t.
It hurts so much.
The rain soaks my hair
As I stand still.
The rain continues to fall
As if Heaven were crying,
Feeling sorry
That I must bear this pain.
I will tell you,
Sometime,
Somehow,
How much I care
About you.
Then my tears will be
Able to fall softly,
To the ground,
Naturally.
Like raindrops…
Select Poems–Part II
Youth Poems

Wannabe Song
A Class Poem—Sophomore English Class
The Winston School

Note: this poem is a riff on Catherine Bowman’s “I Want to Be Your Shoebox” poem, which was itself a riff on Memphis Minnie’s classic blues line “I want to be your chauffer.”

I wanna be your dragon
I wanna be your wagon
I wanna be your pants are baggin’

I wanna be your star
I wanna be & I wanna steal your car
I wanna be in your jar

I wanna be your matrix
I wanna be your chex mix
I wanna be your white chicks

I wanna be your train
I wanna be your half a brain
I wanna enter your lane

I wanna be your microphone
I wanna be your homophone
I wanna be your xylophone

I wanna be your snake skin
I wanna be in your baby pen
I wanna be your Top Ten

I wanna be your tower
I wanna be your higher power
I wanna smell your flower

I wanna be your Batmobile
I wanna be your spinning wheel
I wanna be your power dreel

I wanna be your Wyatt
I wanna know if you can spy it
Why can’t y’all just be quiet?

I wanna be your CPU
I wanna be your Pepe le Pew
I wanna go all the way around the block with you

I wanna be your worm
I wanna be your perm
I wanna make you squirm

I wanna be your dodgeball dodger
I wanna be your only lodger
I so wanna be your Mister Rogers—

I Have Tundra
Haley Hilderbrand

I have tundra. I have found a lot
At the top of the world,
Uniform in appearance,
Its permafrost permanently frozen.
During the brief summers,
Microorganisms grow and reproduce
Sometimes as few as 55 days per year
For the birds,—gyrfalcon,
Ruddy turnstone,
Rock ptarmigan,
Snow bunting,
Snowy owl
& tundra swan.
Mammals:
Arctic fox, caribou,
Musk ox, Norway lemming,
Polar bear.
Rock surfaces
Composed of fungus and algae,
Varieties of lichen.
In the autumn, lichen turn various colors.
Tundra landscape is a stark world—
Plants growing in the tundra are often small,
Tundra birds distribute seeds,
Lichen is the favorite food of caribou and musk ox.
Soil accumulates in pockets or cracks in rocks,
The tundra is often covered with rocks,
Constant freezing and thawing,
The range is holarctic.
Winter on rocky shores
Open stony country,
Tundra,
Mountains;
Winters south of the breeding range.
Flowers grow in between the rocks in summer.

Have You Ever Thought?
Samantha Morale

Have you ever thought,
why is the sky so blue?
or why does the sun shine?

Maybe you asked yourself:
What is happiness?
or why is it
that we get sad?

Or maybe you asked
What is the meaning of life?

We may never
find answers to all of life’s questions.
Select Poems–Part III

Larghetto*
*Catherine-Grace Patrick

How familiar all this is, and how I understand, my love,
when caught between these two goddesses, Past and Future. . . .
—Gustav Mahler

Shadows—silver edged,
arive early in the reading nook.
That knowing smile
warms blue-grey eyes,
perceiving as yet unseen.

Some love letters aren’t written in words.
They leap alive from Time’s tablet,
unfeigned as Sangiovese,
heavy on the vine in July.

“Imagine this,” . . . floats the whisper,
the music falls like a breath of wind
from the cloudless-blue of Autumn—
sudden genesis of a curtained passion,
corporeal—a canticle of the flame.”

Thus begins the aria—
a timeless seed of the soul:

Non ci ricordiamo del giorni;
Noi ci ricordiamo dei momenti.

We do not remember days;
We cherish their moments.

*From “Hymns To The Mahlerian Fire”

Just Be
*Chris Hemingway

just keep moving
don’t care if I don’t want you anymore
just keep rolling
don’t care if you don’t want me anymore
just keep going
don’t care if anyone wants me anymore
just take me to a place
where I can run free in marigolds made of blue and yellow
there is a place where this exists
it lies between fate and Route 66
no directions can lead the way
no roadmap can point to it
use the compass of life in your backpack to find it
now they chase us
why do they fight us
we didn’t do anything to them

My Child
*Mark Hierholzer

My child, my child
Where did you learn who
Your God was? Weren’t the leaves
Always falling on everyone? And
Didn’t you always sense your wrong
Was a part of your right?

My child, when was it you thought
And how long ago, when you sat
In the sterile pew and smelled the incense
That a little Muslim boy prayed his way
In a world on the other side of yours?

When did you conceive of Him,
Make Him your own, the creator
Of only you? When did the blinds close
On your eyes, and still the whole world’s movement
To a single texture, a still-life painting?
When did you decide to remove all universes
But your own? Never forget, my child
Your birth was accident, and what you were
And are is as random as the falling leaves placement
On the dry earth, and yet the leaf will not refuse
To move to the beckoning of the winds of Paradise.

*Voices editors apologize for the misspelling of Mark Hierholzer’s name in the previous issue of Voices. His poem was “All that Burdens.”

Once in a Blue Moon
*Janet Scott McDaniel

I wait beneath a moonlit night
by the twisted tree;
to a nightingale’s sad song
we dance…the moon and me.

We move together across the sky
as days and years glide past,
I whisper fervently the same refrain:
will my true love come at last?

Never does he answer me,
a smile plays upon his face;
so I keep my vigil by the twisted tree,
accepting his silence

…with grace.
Poems From *Voices* Editors

**Into the Night**

*James Brandenburg*

What I thought impossible tonight appeared in a dream the following morning how easy the solution and I did nothing except rest in my bed elves were busy while I slept they come only at night crafting the finest stitched shoes leather befitting a king protecting my flat feet making my long journey into the forest light and breezy.

**The Rule Against Murmuring**

St. Benedict’s Admonition, or How to Win an Election

*Joan Seifert*

Before one dares it, he should know result of murmurs. If one says “the devil take him!” speak lowly. Not the best suggestion, if overheard.

Murmur if you must, but don’t pronounce. The abbot may be called, he will discern the impact then in his rulebook, murmur is advanced to rant.

Choose your devils with discretion, then nod and meet the rivals’ gazes, passive. Do you agree, or not? Suggest no nuance.

At the ballot box each vote is secret. That’s the rule; no one’s the wiser. Then of course the winner, your favorite all along.

**Butterfly Epiphany**

*James R. Adair*

Hue of butter, wings a-flutter, Stillness shatter, silent chatter, Random flitting, grace unwitting, Floating flowers, amber showers, Nectar gleaning, sunbeams sheening, Thing of beauty, sacred duty, Joyous mission, wondrous vision!

**We the Wanderers**

*Mo H Saidi*

Locke believed in people’s natural rights—they are born equal—Blake supposed all children are pure and innocent.

Jefferson fancied a land where a moral life embraces the worship of one’s faith amassing material wealth and living in peace.

Yes, there is a utopia where nobody is king where the sailor crossed the ocean plotted the islands but refused to recognize the amazing new continent, a land where a Norwegian farmer who sold his family’s farm and with his brave pregnant bride boarded a vessel survived the storm, climbed on the new shore built a log house and farmed for corn.

O come, experience freedom and love, seek happiness, accept the universe’s gift: this is the bulwark of democracy.

Come, abandon the status quo, the glum unhappy home, risk your life and cross the high seas, the dangerous borders.

O pristine expanse where aliens pay with their lives when they ford the shallow river and die from the desert heat.

We the wanderers who had heard of the framers arrived aboard the ships, planes, or on foot; we joined the Ancient Warriors the discoverers of the hospitable valleys, the vortexes. O the Second Peoples who rediscovered the continent and built a new nation. O we who longed for freedom—collected crops and constructed the railroads—populated the great cities.

O poets, writers, engineers and doctors who have brought here their brains and hearts and joined the egalitarian masses.

We celebrate this great land; we praise free people, the brave soldiers who return home wounded after arduous tours.
Select Poems—Part IV

A River Waits
Michelli Gomez Ramon

Somewhere a river waits for me
Somewhere I’ve been before

Someplace my hands have known
Swelling in my heart
Casting shadows down my spine

Somewhere a river waits for me
Somewhere beneath the sweet grass

The wind whips tiny words through my hair
They remind me of my father
And the songs he used to leave outside my bedroom door

Somewhere a river waits for me
Somewhere I never expected

16 years ago, 16 years from now
Because our eyes aren’t meant to see
What the heart already knows.

Thames
Dani Adair-Stirling

I’ve walked the river end to end.
White skies don’t dampen the spirits of the rowers in Putney.
Swans glow on the dark sheet of glass during nights in
Hammersmith.
Canal boats bob peacefully with the ducks in Southall,
Yet they’re so alive when they reach Camden.
Shoppers everywhere admire the water’s edge long enough to
eat their lunch.
There are too many icons at Westminster Bridge to pay attention
to the water,
But the London Eye shimmers in the reflection as twilight creeps
in.
The stillness of the water whispers secrets through the twinkled
lights of Chelsea.
Only the statues stop to listen.
Kings and royalty of old scream at you on the tides of Greenwich
In the presence of the castle that bore princesses Mary and
Elizabeth.
Crows and seagulls fly about as they always have on the banks
of the Thames.
Much has changed since Pocahontas herself first discovered
London.
Much has also stayed the same.

Our TMB Generation
Milo Kearney

Expression in our texting age,
when brevity is, above all, the rage,
is clearly, AAMOF
as eloquent as AMF.

It’s not quite Shakespeare, LHM,
or Emily Dickinson, NRN.
But beauty lies, NQA,
in the beholder’s eye, that’s NTK.

So wax poetic, OMG,
until—you decide you’ve SED.
And don’t worry if you cannot spell.
No one will know. We’re LOL.

Key to abbreviations:
TMB: text me back
AAMOF: as a matter of fact
AMF: adios, mother ****
LHM: Lord, have mercy
NRN: no reply necessary
NQA: no questions asked
NTK: nice to know
OMG: Oh my God!
SED: said enough, darling
LOL: laughing out loud

My First Bike
William Z. Saunders

My first bike:
street style
down a
dirt road
rad rider grid pad
peddles too bad
too big for me
sad dad, sad
Thank mom thanks dad
dang crap too tall
for me to grow into.
I could never could
would never would
learn to ride alone,
i’d always wreck
stopping starting.
til i ripped off a
shorter slouchier,
lower to the ground,
older girl’s bike.
monkey bars
banana seat
go-go-go

i tried
to ride
up up and away
hurray

into a tornado
Leonardo
Maria Gabriela Madrid

Born in Vinci
Out of wedlock
Son of a lawyer and a peasant
Cradled in mysteries of the unknown
With a keen eye
He observed nature and the sky
And revealed his genius to all.

Without formal education
Became an inventor, painter, scientist, and engineer
While the walls at home, palace, and jail
Witnessed his happiness and sorrow.

It was he of remarkable beauty
Elegance and style
A homosexual lover
Whose talent and brilliance surpassed the times.

Under candlelight
Left-handed he wrote in mirror-writing
His studies and discoveries
Wrote backward for his pure comfort
Wrote backward for his pure content
And not to escape the judgment of the Church
But perhaps to avoid the running ink
Mess up with his thoughts

He is considered one of the great geniuses
Who advanced science and the arts,
An Italian who mastered everything
And unraveled the web,
Unraveled knowledge
Of the universe:
Leonardo Da Vinci.

Nunca Persegui la Gloria
Antonio Machado

I never chased glory
ni dejar en la memoria
de los hombres mi canción;
yo amo los mundos sutiles,
Ingrávidos y gentiles
como pompas de jabón.
Me gusta verlos pintarse
de sol y grana, volar
bajo el cielo azul, temblar
súbitamente y quebrarse.

I Never Chased Glory
Antonio Machado / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

I never chased glory
to leave my song
in the memory of men;
I love the subtle worlds,
impermanent and gentle
as bubbles of soap.
I like to see them make themselves up
from sun and scarlet, fly
under the blue sky, tremble
suddenly and break.
Life Is like a Storm
Cory Weinberg

As a baby in your mom, you’re the grey clouds rolling in. Don’t
know much, worried what will come ahead. Never let your eyes
off.

As a baby, you’re a drop of rain in a small drizzle. Learning slow-
ly, getting into life, fundamentals are going crazy. Glimpsed at.

As a teenager, life gets bigger—that small drizzle turns to
thunder. Learning like crazy, body changing, getting freedom.
Watched some.

As a young person, life gets busy. That small storm turns into a
tropical storm. Building strength faster and faster, each day get-
ting bigger and faster. Watched closely.

As a married adult, life gets hectic. All of a sudden, you’re a
Level 3 hurricane. Starting to worry people.

As you hit the peak in life, you hit land. Causing devastation,
damaging lives, spinning wildly. Going to stop soon.

As an older person, you become a light rain. Nice and comfort-
ing, fun to play in. Everybody loves you.

As a senior citizen, you become a drizzle. Soft, quiet and peace-
ful. Going to stop, eventually.

As people that have just passed away, you’re the grey clouds
drifting.

Thorns
Josh Perez

Picking, baskets receiving
Sprinkles on happy days
Form circles onto slabs worth remembering
Cherish these thorns when in need
Get poked and you’ll bleed
The Joy of the oncoming event
You know this will happen

Overrated
Hannah Barron

I don’t know what I’m
even writing. I don’t even
know what I’m doing.
I’m thinking but also
not thinking. It’s weird
I know. But to me thinking
is overrated. I just do
whatever comes to mind
then do the rest.
I wonder if we’re even
human. I mean, what if
we were humans but not.
Have you ever thought of that?
Have you ever thought of what
we’re all really in? What if
we were just a huge
illusion and we wouldn’t
know.
If the Moon is so big
then why is it so small?
What would happen if we
were to suddenly just completely
disappear. You’re probably thinking
what the hell are you even
saying?
Or you just completely understand everything.
But what if?
We’re overrated?

Rugged Wagon
Josh Perez

Top Left corner, if you turn it on its side
Makes the Valentine’s profit
Chocolate, sweets, candies that say I love you
Tear of the torn dissolves these
People comfort, people buy
But again, the tear of the torn dissolves these
Bottom Right corner, if you turn it on its side
It acts as if it’s a horseshoe
Taking in all the luck
People comfort, people buy
They give and give, hoping for the best
The tear of the torn does not dissolve
Gravity lifts the horseshoe luck
The Rugged Wagon has been repaired
Select Poems–Part VII

Haikus
Sol Macias

The Fool
I thought it was Love
the Sacred Geometry
frosted on windows

Spring Has Awakened
Blossoms billowing
jasmine snowflakes descending

The Bloom of Fruit
Heavy trees made light
by softly blowing breezes
draping life anew

Everlasting First Encounter
Light breaks the Morning
happiness always welcomes
the smell of your hair

Still Life, with Crows
Janet Scott McDaniel

Held by a frame of faded gold,
weak winter sun shines through twisted oak branches,
the hill upon which they stand falling away to mist.

Above the trees, inky black
against steel gray clouds that fill the sky
a murder of crows fly,
wings outspread, slowly circling.

Encased in splintered wood,
through a cracked windowpane pale yellow rays
tiptoe silently across the dusty floor,
past the scent of cobwebs and rumpled sheets,
to lie with whispers left upon the pillow.

It hangs askew, paint cracking and peeling
on the aged canvas, as seasons pass without sound;
yet,
when the wind follows free

in the whispers left behind,
deep secret wisdom remains,
in their echoes,
still inky black upon a steel gray sky,
crows
still fly.

Art in the City
Bismarck Studios Contemporary Fine Art Gallery

Exhibition of Inge H. Schmidt
A Berlin Artist
Voices Cover Page Artist
www.bismarckstudios.com

Berlin artist Inge H. Schmidt is one of the most sought-after painters in Germany. Her work has been exhibited in numerous galleries and museums in Europe, Asia, and the USA. She lives and works in Berlin.

On Oct. 3, 1990, East and West Germany were united, and a new Germany was born. Now, some twenty years later, an exhibition featuring the work of East German artists who challenged the status quo is touring throughout the U.S. It’s called Breakthrough!

Painter Inge H. Schmidt experienced joy and trauma when, as a young woman in 1985, she received official permission to study art in the West. East German authorities gave her less than six hours to pack everything she owned and say goodbye to her family—she thought—forever. Schmidt recalls the moment when she walked through the barbed wire gate into an uncertain future.

After the Wall tumbled down, Schmidt’s work reflected the problems faced by East Germans after unification as we see in the painting titled “Warm Welcome” from 1989. The work shows glimmers of golds and yellows representing the West, which seemed like a gleaming paradise to East Germans. But there’s darkness in the painting, too. The photo shows Schmidt, Christa Brothers (curator of the exhibit), and Voices cover art (July 2011 issue) at the Schmidt exhibition at Bismarck Studios on Thursday, 15 Mar 2012.

Top Ten Works of the 20th Century
from The Top Ten: Writers Pick Their Favorite Books
http://www.theatlantic.com

1. *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
2. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
3. *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust
4. *Ulysses* by James Joyce
5. *Dubliners* by James Joyce
6. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
7. *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner
8. *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf
9. The complete stories of Flannery O’Connor
10. *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov

Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2012
Power Glove
William Z. Saunders

I think a lot about inspiration, specifically about what it takes for me to feel creative, or better yet to be productive.

I used to believe, and still do I guess, that it came from outside.

I had this experience when I re-read Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas after I’d finally stopped drinking and using drugs. I first read it in high school in suspension, when I had never taken acid or ever gotten or been drunk. Then, when I read it, I couldn’t comprehend a lot of the dialogue about the things the characters were seeing and doing until years later, when I had done my share of L.S.D. and tried all kinds of dope. When the movie came out, a buddy of mine and I tried to go see it while we were tripping on acid. That didn’t work out so well.

Anyway…I re-read the book after I got outta rehab. In this reading, when I came to a certain part of the book, when Raoul Duke is describing the way his attorney looked to him in a bar, it said that he was wearing one black glove.

I underlined those words because they seemed imperative, and not to be overlooked in the description. I understood now as I did then why the guy was wearing it. I knew the significance, but it’s on another level of realism that my black glove materialized.

I lived in a 3/4 house on the West Side and was skating a lot. One day on Aurora, I found a black fingerless left hand glove on the street. It made sense to me then that I should pick it up and wear it. I tried it on and it fit. From then on, I would put it in my back pocket whenever I went anywhere, and I’d wear it when I got to my favorite spot, an epic West side ditch system on Commerce and Acme. You can drive there. I used to skate to it. It was my back yard for 2 1/2 years.

I would also wear it when I was alone in my room cleaning and/or writing in my journal. I also liked to wear this Chinese house coat that had a big dragon embroidered on the back. I found it in a backpack on the train tracks downtown somewhere, when I was still on methadone. Anyway, I used to equate being productive with getting weird, looking strange, and acting funny.

I gave the glove away one day to a dear friend named Slim. He is a heavy-set fellow, not too tall, with sad eyes and a big heart. He weighs about 300 lbs. I asked if I could borrow it back recently, for I thought I’d need it to knock out some unfinished write biz that I been working on for a long time. I’m on a deadline now. Whether he couldn’t find it, couldn’t be bothered to look for it, or gave it away, doesn’t matter. I know now that being creative and feeling inspired isn’t merely derived from the external. For me, it’s a matter of exercise, working and praying through it, being patient, and quietly behaving.

Paradise Harbor, Antarctica
Photo by Mo and Brigitte Saidi

Poetry Therapy

Poets use poetry to deal with such issues as heroin/alcohol addiction, death, abandonment, and sexual and emotional abuse. The following authors illustrate the use of writing to deal with these issues.

Who Knew?
Vivian Kearney

A promised meeting
written on a cloud calendar
that you did not note
years ago.

And now, now
that you have older sight
what do you say
to your former selves

who reside in
almost forgotten places and times

to encourage
continuous walking
towards that unimagined reunion
when you can chat together
and ask
who knew?

Predestination?
Milo Kearney

Superficial chimeras—
now hairy lions,
now bald eagles,
now smooth ants,
now wrinkled worms—
we are, nonetheless,
as unchanging
as Medusa-transfixed stone.

If we are going to be basically transformed,
it will have to be after death,
by an Almighty God,
and a lot of luck.

Weight
Sharon Luna

Peeking onto the brilliant stage
I see the green train
 exiting left with a riddle,
“Where has the elephant gone?”
Freed from the weighted room.
Awakening (The Birth of Eve)
Elizabeth Crooks

Your eyes, O God, opened at dawn and I was not hidden. You breathed and your words awakened me as warmth clothed my substance. My eyes smiled back at you as my heart embraced your joy. I listened for your thoughts and through the silence I knew you could hear me. Your voice is pure, the whispering gentle breeze through fronds of nearby palm trees. I hear you whisper to me and I understand. I am a reflection of you. I reach beyond the ordinary to touch you in your world of splendor. For I know you are the designer of light bursting forth from the womb of night, Assigning each star a song. You tell the morning where to rest, changing the mind of darkness. My heart dances as I watch you bathe the earth with dewdrops In order to dress the heavens with colors of rainbows. Through your eyes O God I was created.

Holy Ground
Vivan Kearney

Let’s take the risk to walk slowly into the thin place the meditative, spiritual place and breathe with our souls look with our hearts at the catedraled clouds listen with our spirits to the symphonies in the wind then let’s write what they tell us about God, the Musician, the Architect, the Poet, the Comforter.

Be Joyous
Kimberly Bemrich

Joy and woe are neither friends nor foes But rather a way to perceive situations. In taking time to find joy in woe, Woe will fizzle. In taking time to find woe in joy, Joy will fizzle.

I decide who, what, when, where, and how Joy or woe finds me.

If woe finds me when I am weak I have a duty to myself to face woe with a smile.

If joy finds me when I am weak I have a duty to myself to embrace joy with a smile Although I’d much rather cry.

In the midst of joy we find can find woe If we dig deep enough. And in the midst of woe We too can find joy If we dig deep enough.

It is me who decides when to cry, sigh, and be miserable. It is me too who decides when to laugh, smile, and be happy.

Everyday we have a choice to choose woe or joy.
I choose joy I hope you choose joy too.
My Father: A Parting Memory
James Brandenburg

My father played blocks with me
winter’s fatigued breath falling on our cold floor and I felt all warm because my father played blocks with me the only toys I knew toys he gave me and I placed them one on top of another.

Meanwhile they came tumbling down blocks strewn like discarded fatalities all around and as I picked them up to place them he was gone.

Untitled
Ulrike Rowe

Poetry & Dreams
Poetry, Dreams, and Interpretation
James Brandenburg

Mother Appears
May 14, 2011
San Antonio, Texas

Dream: The first part of the dream takes place in Galveston, Indiana, where I lived as a child. We are in the living room in our old house; we lived in one of the three apartments. My mother was there. She was the age of her death, except her hair was pitch black, like it was when she was younger. There was a green figure 8 over the living room mantel, pressed against a dark background. I could not reach it. Mother had some sort of long tweezers and was able to retrieve it for me. She handed it to me, engaged with me, but seemed somewhat removed. End of this part of the dream.

Comment: Personally, before I had this dream, there was much chaos in my life. I needed this dream, and the unconscious sent it to me. First of all, that my mother appears in this dream is profound. What a role model she was during my lifetime! Reserved, unassuming, positive, loving, caring, and giving, she embodied the essence of Christ. Her mind was clear until she died at the age of 89 from cancer. Yet she had always felt guilty for allowing me to live with my aunt and uncle in Kentucky during a particularly difficult point in her life (she suffered a nervous breakdown after my father abandoned us). However, I later lived with her and my sister for three years while I attended Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. I was in contact with my mother until she died. She was a spiritual light and had the gift of a healer.

Psychologically, we can understand the eight as a symbol for the possibility or need for consciousness as a result of an inner development. The journey of the soul (seven steps) in the vessel of the psyche gives birth to the inner new light. My mother was the carrier of this new light in the dream. As completion of the seven steps, the eight is also connected to the realm beyond time and death, to the immortal soul and to eternity, a fact that we can see in the mathematical symbol for eternity—a horizontal 8. The message here is that there is supreme order and meaning in the soul, in spite of the chaos on the surface. Mother’s closeness to Christ is evident in this dream. Mother had the means (the tweezers) to retrieve this figure 8 for me (Theodor Abt, Introduction to Picture Interpretation, 148).
Comment: Often poems act like dreams, in that they come from the unconscious. “Komodo,” by Marisol Macías, is such a poem. Her poem was triggered by watching a documentary on the predatory behavior of the Komodo dragon, and, on reflection, she connected the behavior to herself as she would have been and a man with predatory behavior. She states that she wrote the poem as a person watching the scene unfold between prey and predator. Since she had been the object of prey in the past, she projected herself as watching what the outcome would have been if she were the prey. Her past Self would have been consumed by the small little nick that infected and consequently readied Komodo’s prey for a final fatal blow in which he could satisfy his own hunger. The present Self acknowledges the unconscious and is able to assess the progress that has been made towards a healthier attitude in relationships and now recognizes the signs to avoid future predators.

A Dream within A Dream

Edgar Allan Poe

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?
Healing through Art and Poetry

**Mothers**

*Gidge Trott*

There are a variety of Mothers.
Some are fun - but there are others -
Some who hold the reins too tight,
Some who make a dull day bright.
The one who sits up waiting - late into the night,
Then slips into bed and is “fast asleep”
When you turn out your light.
The dream some Mothers have, that makes them feel secure,
That you will meet that perfect “someone,”
Good looking, rich, mature.
The one at the wedding who will shed a happy tear,
then close the door, kick off her shoes,
and change to more comfortable gear.
There are some who find it hard to loosen the apron strings.
Yet others would gladly cut them off to do more exciting things.
But Mothers the world over
are really a lot the same.
They all have the cleverest, brightest, most beautiful babies
in every form and name.
It’s love that motivates them all,
to let you know what’s good in life
With everything to gain.
So let’s be gentle to our Mothers
On this coming Mother’s Day.
Send them a card
or give them a gift.
Just spoil them generally.
It’s a special time when you can show
That you treasure the love she gives.
So—no excuses, if it’s only a call!—
no matter where she lives.

**Potential**

*William Z. Saunders*

I have been on one heckuva hiatus from doing any real writing for some stretch of time. Call it a season. I got behind and quit growing again. It happens. Like I imagine heavyweight boxers get fat after a big fight, my output tends to dwindle after a deadline, or when I finish a semester of school. I like to prove my procrastination in terms of not writing/reading and resting, instead of maintaining and training during the off-season. I take my eyes off the prize and instead stand still beside the kill like a cat would drag a corpse to the doorstep, so that you’ll see what I’ve done. I like attention, and praise, but it cuts both ways, because I forget to jam the juice to utilize the flow and you know….what it brings.

I get behind everything, but the big one that blocks me up is a mess, my mess. I let clutter pile up, and dust, and dishes. And I push it aside, and allow more of a mess to amass, until I have a mountain of crud between me and the world. It’s always there, but I am a great pretender. The mind moves it out-of-the-way, but it stays there stuck in the valve conductor of heart/mind/god/machine/creator/reality. And, it takes a motivator to move her toward either the uplift or the downfall. See for me, I have found, that in inspiration there ain’t no middle ground.

Greenback Valentine

*Jennifer Schooley*

Every Day

*Earl Salazar*

Every Day with every step forward I get pushed back.
Every Day I stumble through life in the dark.
Every Day I fall a little farther from Grace.
Every Day I fall or am pushed down again and again
Every Day I get pushed back I step forward again.
Every Day I stumble in the dark I keep walking.
Every Day I fall from Grace I keep looking for the light.
Every Day I fall I get back up,
Slower but I get back up.
Seeking a Name
Lianne Mercer

the animal cries at dawn
moan without melody
hum of night abandoning its familiar
long blowing of nose trumpet
keening across fields and failings of light
scritch of fingernails on glass
arthritic clock hands syncopating time
hoarse teakettle whinnying on stove
rusty saw seizing wood now ashes
sadness slithering down bark
final hurrah hurtling into silence

Purple
Sharon Luna

Protected by the strands of gold.
Purple in the driven snow.
Keeping warmth in troubled times.
Finding peace they left behind.

Oh soul of mine,
you’ve seen with time
the riddles taught
beyond the lines
of what we think
and what we speak.
In joys and tears
is where we meet.

So take me now away from here.
Only there we disappear.
Protected by the strands of gold.
Purple in the driven snow.

Boulevard of Broken Dreams
Sophia E. DiGonis

It’s the street where all hopes and dreams are made,
Recycled and reinvented—it’s all Hollywood.
Everyone here has the same goal, but on a different path,
A different road and quite possibly, a different purpose.

The same people, the same kind of people
That discover the “next big thing” and it feels like
The same act makes it every ten years…

The same struggles, the same suffering,
Only to continue to work on the same boulevard,
The same road only to be discovered by the same people.

For as far as I know, the same people who hire for projects
In music and films have seen Clark Gable and Mae West
Perform in their prime!

Hollywood—it’s all Hollywood.
The same formula was used then, as it is now.

The picture, the painting of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean,
Humphrey Bogart
And Dean Martin as the bar tender—this picture says a lot—
Such a mesmerizing picture of these iconic figures that
Hollywood has set
Standards for us all—

I can relate to this picture, and possibly
Those observing this picture would want to be
At least one of these figures for just a moment in their lives
to escape their own problems.

But if you look at these figures’ lives, of the drinking, other
addictions
And the pressures to be who they really are—
Is that desired? Do we really want that?
That is the question.

How can you take it? How can you handle it?
Do you really want that kind of pressure?

Some of us have dealt with that kind of pressure all our lives.
As I look at the bar of these figures of Marilyn Monroe,
James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, and Dean Martin—
In that moment, I understand their pressures
from the rest of the world because I feel that same way.
However, I realize in the long run, it is nothing...

In the world of Hollywood, there could one day be another me!
Tomorrow, in ten minutes, or ten years!

Because the stars of tomorrow emulate the stars of yesterday!

I am correct in calling it the Boulevard of Broken Dreams—
Because the moment, another you, or another me is made
Means that the dream is over…

Scene in Urbino, Italy
The Sagebrush Review is a literary journal produced by the students of the University of Texas at San Antonio. We are also classified by the U.S. Government as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

It is our mission here at the Review to collect submissions from the talented citizens of San Antonio, Texas, and publish the best in art, photography, and literature this city has to offer.

Every year The Sagebrush Review publishes one journal of our most highly rated submissions. These submissions are judged by members of The Sagebrush Review, the majority of whom are also active in the fine arts community here in San Antonio.

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I Make the Coffee, She Makes the Bed
Matthew Guzman

Routine, a brainless endeavor but also comforts

I make the coffee, she makes the bed

Travel, we always dreamed of seeing the world, learn to say I love you in fifteen different languages, as cliché as that might seem

I make the coffee, she makes the bed

Kids, we raised two fine ones, a boy and a girl; they live in different cities, both grown, a thousand miles away

I make the coffee, she makes the bed

Cancer, one year passed the slow silence of an empty house

I make the coffee, she made the bed

Graphic Arts
Pictures from the Frozen Earth

Antarctica is the highest, driest, windiest, emptiest, and coldest place on earth. An ice sheet covers all but 2.4 percent of Antarctica’s 14 million square kilometers, and it’s one-and-a-half times the size of the United States. At its thickest point the ice sheet is 4,776 meters deep, and it averages 2,160 meters. Antarctica holds over 90 percent of the earth’s ice and 70 percent of all the world’s fresh water. There are about five million penguins, thousands of whales and seals, myriads of krill (the main food for whales and penguins), and even fish in Antarctica’s waters, but there are no land mammals and no native peoples. Eskimos and polar bears are found only in the Arctic, not the Antarctic.

There are many different species of penguins in Antarctica, including the huge and colorful emperor penguin; the smaller Adelie, gentoo, chinstrap, rockhopper, king, and macaroni penguins also live on the continent. In all there are twenty-one species of penguin scattered throughout the southern hemisphere. Penguins are great swimmers. They can move very fast, more than twenty-five miles per hour, if they’re trying, for instance, to escape the jaws of a leopard seal. They can even shoot out of the water seven feet into the air onto the safety of an ice floe.

Seals in Antarctic waters include the Weddell seal, the Ross seal, the crabeater, and the leopard seal. On the Antarctic Peninsula there are also elephant seals and fur seals. These southern seals are still recovering from the devastation wrought by the nineteenth century sealers. Six species of baleen whales and six species of toothed whales and dolphins are found in Antarctic waters. The former include the blue, fin, southern right, sei, minke, and humpback whales; the latter include the sperm, killer, and fourtooth whales and the hourglass, right whale, and southern bottlenose dolphins.

Penguins are the most noticeable Antarctic birds, but there are actually more petrels than there are penguins! Petrels include albatrosses, fulmars, prions, shearwaters, storm petrels, diving petrels and Gadfly petrels. Petrels are found in all the world’s oceans, but there are more in Antarctic waters than anywhere else.

Other birds that live or breed in Antarctica include cormorants, gulls, skuas and terns, and land birds such as sheathbills and pintail ducks. To see more photos and several videos from Antartica, please visit www.voicesdelaluna.com.

Photos and videos courtesy of Mo and Brigitte Saidi, taken during their recent expedition to Antarctica.
More Editors’ Poems

Reds*
Carol Coffee Reposa

In Russian
Words for beautiful and red
Curl around each other, root on root
Like arms of lovers
Caught in a long embrace.

Red girls
With their crimson smiles
Walk arm in arm
Through rows of bursting apple trees
On August afternoons.

Red waves roll
At sunrise
Down glass walls
Into the Moscow River
Mirroring red domes.

Red carnations
Mark the places
Where old patriots
Sleep beautifully beneath
The cobbles on Red Square.

In country houses
Old Believers
Worship at the Red Corner,
Icons stiff with reverence
Gold leaf, lace

And in cathedrals
Red peels off
The robes of saints. Flecks
Of plaster fall
To waiting hands.

Pillars in red porphyry
Line Metro stops
Like armies,
Soldiers caught forever
In a red salute

While firebirds
Stretch their blazing wings,
Drop red feathers
On the pages
Of a thousand books.

Crimson currents run
Through Red October
Centuries before and after
Red stars spinning
On the Kremlin towers

Revolution
Throwing sparks
Into the lives
That pulse
Along red streets

And even when the lights
Go off, red marks ends, beginnings,
Absolute convergence
Of the blood’s red melodies
In fusion as complete as love.

*First published in Borderlands

Salado Creek
Lou Taylor

Rocky scar in the woods
Dry stones
Line miles of creek bed

Waters once bubbled and sang
As they flowed here

Currents circling
Ripples undulating
Lively motions
Reflecting sunlight
Catching shadows
Going deep and surfacing again
Respite for eons
Of thirsty travelers
Comanche camp site
On the edge of town
Drought stricken
Dormant
Waiting for rain

I Remember Little Things
Valerie Martin Bailey

The twinkle in your eyes, the fragrance of your cologne—
the way you combed your hair in front of the bathroom mirror,
combing and patting the waves into place.
I remember your ubiquitous blue shirts and the way you
placed your shoes in the closet, side by side with your socks
stuffed inside the shoes instead of the hamper.

I had to remember to retrieve them before doing the laundry...I
didn’t mind, you brought me coffee every morning.

I remember your strength, your gentleness and the comforting
warmth of your embrace.

These little things make up the vast aching wasteland
of missing you.
Nothing breaks a person like seeing a two-year-old lying in his own small casket, surrounded by stuffed animals and drops of mascara.

Lunch Break
Clark Watts

While the more organized among us leave little to chance when traveling, I have been impressed by the number of times my trips have resulted in unplanned but uplifting adventures. So it was, during one of several assignments to teach in the military in Europe. I found myself in western West Germany with a day free in the middle of the week. I decided to drive over to Luxembourg City, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, for some lunch and a little sightseeing. It was a relatively comfortable day,overcast with temperatures in the 70s (F).

As I headed back to West Germany, it began to rain, not much, but enough to require the windshield wipers. There was very little traffic. About three in the afternoon I encountered a “roundabout,” a common way of handling intersections in Western Europe, especially in rural areas. As I entered this particular one, I saw, down the road to my right, a group of people walking toward my position. The people—men, women, children, elderly, young—about 300 in number, were carrying freshly-cut flowers. And it continued to rain.

My curiosity piqued, I pulled over, stopped the car, and waited for them to arrive. As they came toward me, I intercepted a young man, introduced myself as an American, and asked him of the occasion. It seems the town had been doing this, on this day, every year since the end of World War II. They were going to put flowers on the graves in the American Military Cemetery at Hamm, to honor “your fallen soldiers, our liberators.” His English skills slipped a little with the last word, but I knew what he meant. The date was the day their town had been liberated from German occupation by the American Third Army commanded by General George Patton. I decided to accompany them to the cemetery, which I had not known was in the vicinity, and would have missed except for my encounter with the villagers.

Upon arriving at the cemetery, I noticed there were others there, no doubt from another village. As this group prepared to enter the cemetery, I self-consciously stepped aside to let those of the village pass. Within a moment or so, my hand was taken by a much smaller one. A young girl, about ten, had grasped my hand and, with that effort, encouraged me to continue into the cemetery. But from my right came a young woman, the child’s mother I subsequently learned, rushing toward us, mildly admonishing the child for her boldness. She stretched out a hand of welcome to me. I took her hand and squeezed it lightly while nodding in affirmation of the child’s behavior. For a very brief moment in time, we three stood as an island within the flowing crowd, the encounter a little awkward, but certainly satisfying to us. The child broke the spell by a relatively aggressive tug on my hand. The mother tried unsuccessfully to suppress a short laugh and said that we should go. So together, the three of us entered the cemetery. The child handed me a few flowers, as did her mother. To the delight of the villagers in the vicinity, I placed them on several graves. I then stepped away from the grave sites to watch and to reflect. It was no longer raining.

There were about 5000 graves in the cemetery, including that of General Patton. His grave was separated from the remainder of the graves in the cemetery by several yards, as if still in a position of command. This situation is rare, as such distinctions are seldom made with regard to rank or command in U.S. military cemeteries. The visit to the cemetery was a very moving experience, one duplicated when my wife and I were at the American Military Cemetery at Normandy in France, where there are 9000 graves, including that of Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the only general officer on the beaches in the first wave on D-day.

Military cemeteries of the United States, both at home and abroad, are impressive sights, not only because of who is there and why, but because of the way they are laid out. The rows are perfect in their parallelism, the alignments of the identical headstones—matchless. No matter from which direction you view them, the symmetry and orderliness is breathtaking. Personally, I find the structure of these cemeteries, although simple in design, among the most beautiful creations of man. As I view them, their effect is to create within me a quiet reverence and sublimity for the space, the moment, and the purpose.

If one headstone were to be disturbed, the symmetry, the orderliness would vanish, no matter which stone was involved. Their inherent stand for equality is unmatched by any institution in our society. Thus, the contribution of each grave to the serenity and beauty of the whole is as critical as that of any other grave in the cemetery, no matter the person in the grave, or where it is located (excepting Patton’s grave, the location of which is unusual). This principle is perhaps the most simple and yet the most profound expression we have of the ratification of Man’s basic pact with Man; each person is as worthy as any, and all.

Later, as I was continuing my return journey to West Germany, I could not keep my mind off what I had just experienced. I concluded that the most important lesson from that experience was the one of equality, but the supporting story began well before the cemetery. At some point in the life of each soul resting in that hallowed place, each had accepted as his duty service to our country, service more complex and more difficult for some than for others, but service that included for all of them the ultimate sacrifice. With this sacrifice they were joined in life by a single purpose, and in death honored with identical distinctions to those who lay around them—a simple headstone, name, rank, unit (sometimes), campaigns.

The sun came out; it was a beautiful day to be an American.
Détente Sombra
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Détente, sombra de mi bien esquivo,
imagen del hechizo que más quiero,
bella ilusión por quien alegre muero,
dulce ficción por quien penosa vivo.

Si al imán de tus gracias, atractivo,
sirve mi pecho de obediente acero,
¿para qué me enamoras lisonjero
si has de burlarme luego fugitivo?

Mas blasonar no puedes, satisfecho,
de que triunfa de mí tu tiranía:
que aunque dejas burlado el lazo estrecho
que tu forma fantástica ceñía,
poco importa burlar brazos y pecho
si te labra prisión mi fantasía.

Rima LIII
Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer

Volverán las oscuras golondrinas
en tu balcón sus nidos a colgar,
y otra vez con el ala a sus cristales
juegando llamarán;
pero aquellas que el vuelo refrenaban
tu hermosura y mi dicha a contemplar;
aquellas que aprendieron nuestros nombres,
ésas… ¡no volverán!

Volverán las tupidas madreselvas
de tu jardín las tapias a escalar,
y otra vez a la tarde, aun más hermosas,
sus flores se abrirán;
pero aquellas cuajadas de rocío,
cuyas gotas mirábamos temblar
y caer, como lágrimas del día…,
ésas… ¡no volverán!

Volverán del amor en tus oídos
las palabras ardientes a sonar;
tu corazón, de su profundo sueño
tal vez despertará;
pero mudo y absorto y de rodillas,
como se adora a Dios ante su altar,
como yo te he querido…, desengañaste:
¡sí no te quedrás!

Stop, Shadow
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

Stop, my fine elusive shadow,
image of the charm I most desire,
beautiful illusion for whom I will happily die,
sweet fiction for whom I painfully live.

If the magnet of your grace attracts,
my heart will respond like obedient steel.
So why do you coerce my love with your allure,
if only to mock me then flee like a fugitive?

However, you cannot boast, confident,
that your tyranny triumphs over me:
for though you broke the bond
that surrounded your fantastic form,
little matters to mislead arms and chest
if you are laboring in the prison of my fantasy.

Rhyme LIII
Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

The swallows will return
to hang their nests from your balcony,
again their wings will grace your window
and call playfully;
But those who restrained their flight
from your beauty and my blissful contemplation;
those that learned our names,
those… will never return!

The robust honeysuckle will return
to your garden, scaling the walls,
in the early evening, its flowers open,
picturesque;
But those decorated with dew drops,
which we watched tremble and fall,
like tears of the day…,
those… will not return!

The sound of passionate words
of love will return to echo in your ears;
your heart, from its deep sleep
will maybe wake;
But mute, enthralled, and kneeling,
like worshiping God before his altar,
lake I have loved you… realize:
you will not find love like this again!
Short Fiction

As Mercury Descends

Amber Duncan

I watch the ice crackle and melt in the cup, tall and plastic, for a few seconds—seconds that seem to last for hours. The left side of my upper lip curls into a crooked smile. I dip the silver spoon into the cup, scoop up a chunk of ice, and place it in my mouth. It’s not so much the cold that I like, or the way pieces of broken ice, like tiny particles of glass, slide down the back of my throat. No. What I like about ice is that it transforms. Ice to water. Water to steam. Snow. Rain. Precipitation. Solid, liquid, gas. There’s beauty there, in the elements, waiting.

The idea that one thing can be many intrigues me. That one object has numerous functions fascinates me. Knowing that I’m witnessing nature (or is it nurture?) unfold before my eyes makes me feel like I’m in on a secret of the world. Perhaps not everyone knows about the transformation of ice…no, that’s not right. Perhaps everyone knows about it, but they don’t stop to look, to watch it for themselves. Maybe they don’t care. I slip another piece of ice into my mouth, allowing the spoon to linger upon my tongue. At one point, I think that I’m drawing the coating off of the utensil because I feel something thick, like mercury, slide down the back of my throat. I take the spoon from my mouth and lick from my lip a residue of raw nickels.

A few hours go by and all the ice has melted. I don’t bother drinking it, now that it’s water. Melted ice doesn’t taste the same as water from a bottle or even from the kitchen faucet. I twirl the spoon around my fingers, under the table. Like a baton, it weaves in and out. I bite my lower lip, and again a crooked grin passes over my face as I slide the spoon into my pocket.

Center on the table, I lay a ten dollar bill. Technically, the cup of ice is free—that’s all I ever order—but I pay for my bad habit. It’s not a habit that can be broken easily. I’ve been confiscating spoons for some time now. My fingers caress the metallic stolen object deep in my pocket as I make my way home.

When I get back to my house, I take out the spoon and lay it beside the others—14,953 spoons, in the living room alone, and all from the same small diner on Irving and 3rd. A great portion of my collection lines the walls. Just as mirrors in a fun house distort perception, my spoons do the same. My eyes stare back at me in the dips and curves, each view slightly more askew than the next, but none provide a clear image of myself, an image that’s never really clear at all.

Hanging from the ceiling, in a makeshift chandelier, are elevenspoons. Light reflects off them—whether the light is natural or from the sick-yellow hue of the fluorescent light is not important, but the shiny prism-like mirrored reflections that dance on the kitchen walls create a type of fantasy world. The spots shimmering on the walls remind me of fireflies that I used to capture in mason jars that smelled of dill pickles—soaked, saturated, drowned in vinegar. My brother used to take the fireflies from the oxygen-deprived sealed enclosures, out of their imposed captivity, and then smear them on the soles of his tennis shoes. In the night, his shoes glowed an eerie greenish-yellow. With his fingers covered in what he called “alien blood,” he would chase me around the cemetery near our house, trying to wipe off the alien blood on my jacket. I never knew that he killed the fireflies. I always thought he just let them go.

It wasn’t until fourteen years later that he finally told me that he had killed the fireflies. I didn’t ask him about it, he just told me. I had forgotten. I had placed the alien blood deep in the back of my cerebral cortex, never imagining that I would come across that scene from childhood again. And yet, it did come up. If my brother wanted to confess to me about something that happened in our childhood, I really wish he would have talked about opacity. Opaque-city. Opakesity.

He never went into detail about what he described as an “inbetweeness.” I just ignored him. We all ignored him. Now…now everyone ignores me. I should’ve known what my brother was talking about when he said inbetweeness. He muttered about light and dark, but not bright or black. I should’ve known. He lived in an area of gray, of off-white, and in the dawns and dusks, of mid-mornings, mid-afternoons, and mid-nights. A perpetual smile plastered on his face, like he was the only one in on the joke.

Maybe I finally get it. Maybe I finally understand what inbetweeness is all about. It is an area between right and wrong. Good or bad. Up and down. Left and right. The area between everything, that’s where my brother lives…lived. I get it now. It is a space of transition, where things can transform. Things like elements, objects, or people can morph into something that they were always meant to be or change into something completely different. A small clicking disrupts my thoughts and my head shifts slightly.

I look around the room slowly. Dark gray. Rust and tarnish. Little spots of black, little spots that don’t end on the spoon, but have started to creep down and form veins on the wall. Silver (I know it’s not sterling, but it’s still precious to me) sings a high note like a woman belting out an opera in the highest of sopranos—an inhuman (unnatural) octave (cry) above all others. The spoons ding and chime oﬀ each other and create music that echoes throughout the old house.

Wringing my hands, I turn around the living room, taking in each spoon plastered to the wall. Like tiny, individual mirrors, I can see not only my reflection, but also that inbetweeness. This is it. This is what he talked about. It took me a long time to get here, and now I know.

Phase Two

Josh Lopez

“Johnny? Are you ready?” Diane called out from where she was lying on the sofa. She was already in her dress and had her arm flopped over her forehead because of the headache. She thought maybe she’d taken one too many of her pills. Johnny looked at himself in the mirror as he stood on the small wooden stool his mother kept in front of the sink for him. He liked seeing himself so dressed up in his suit and tie. There was a knock at the front door.

“Johnny, can you get that, please?” asked Diane, hardly audible. Johnny hopped oﬀ his stool and headed for the door. “Hello, Mr. Mike,” said Johnny after opening the door. Mr. Mike lived down the hall and always accompanied Johnny and his mother to Tuesday nights up on the hill.
“Ready, sport? The best night of the week is here!” said Mr. Mike with a smile as he leaned elegantly on the tip of his umbrella as if it were a cane. His shiny white beard went nicely with his yellow tuxedo and top hat. The simple fact that Mr. Mike was crazy enough to wear such an outfit was one of the reasons Johnny liked him so much.

“Momma’s not feelin’ good,” said Johnny, pointing to the couch.

“Oh, not again. The headaches?” asked Mr. Mike.

“Yep,” answered Johnny. “Poor gal, she just gets so excited whenever Tuesday rolls around.” Mr. Mike stepped into the apartment and Johnny closed the door behind him. “May I offer you a beverage, Mr. Mike? Momma whipped us up some good juice a little while ago. I reckon we have some left, if you’d like.”

“You’re such a polite boy, Johnny,” said Mr. Mike, chuckling. “Nothing for me, but let’s get a glass for your mother, yeah? Some juice might do her good.”

“Aye, aye, captain!” replied Johnny with a salute before heading into the kitchen.

“Hello, Diane,” said Mr. Mike.

“My head…” she whispered. “It’s the pills. I know it is.”

“Diane, you know that can’t be. You need them,” answered Mr. Mike, stroking Diane’s forehead softly with his fingertip. “We all do if we don’t want to be afraid.”

“It feels strange. I feel strange. Like I don’t even recognize Johnny sometimes.” Her voice was low and soft. She was having trouble keeping her eyes open. “I see him come into the room—a small boy, my boy, and then he sits down in the chair over there to watch TV with me, and when I look at him again, he’s turned into a tiny man who is not my son at all.”

“You’re just beginning to see things more clearly. Sometimes it’s a little uncomfortable or disorienting, but that just means you’re coming around. The music will be extra uplifting for you tonight.”

“Is it still raining?” Diane asked.

“Yes,” answered Mr. Mike as Johnny came back into the room with Diane’s glass of juice.

“I don’t think I can go,” she said. “I really don’t think I can….”

Mr. Mike helped her drink the glass of juice, and then he and Johnny got her up onto her feet and into her coat.

“Thank you,” mumbled Diane.

Once they were outside, Mr. Mike opened his umbrella and held it over them as they stepped outside of Dormitory Five into the sprinkling rain. Everyone else living at Phase Two was doing the same thing at that moment, all headed to the hill. Johnny splashed in as many puddles as he could along their walk up to the hill. The cuffs of his suit pants were completely drenched and muddy in no time.

“That’s good, Johnny. Keep it up! That’s really havin’ some fun,” said Mr. Mike.

“Good job, Johnny,” echoed Diane. She’d felt a dull pain in her head for the past three days that had been getting more and more uncomfortable. She leaned her head on Mr. Mike’s shoulder and closed her eyes as they strolled down the sidewalk past the cafeteria. Johnny lingered behind because a toad sitting in the grass had caught his attention.

“Hello, Mr. Frog!” he said to it. “Enjoyin’ the rain, are you?”

He squatted down to get a better look at the toad. “We’re on our way up to the hill.” He patted it on the head, and then hurried along to catch up with his mother and Mr. Mike. The evening sun had broken through the dark sky just enough to blanket the sides of the deep green hills that surrounded them in a shimmering golden yellow. Tuesday evening was the best night of the week, just like Mr. Mike had said, because that was when everyone at Phase Two came out of the dormitories to meet on the hill and listen to the music Jeffrey played for them on his stereo. It was usually a rendition of the same song each week, but most of the people in Phase Two didn’t notice or didn’t care. Jeffrey was their leader; messiah even. Most importantly, he was their friend, and that was a big part of what made Phase Two the special place that it was.

This particular Tuesday evening was extra special because Jeffrey had come clean through a heartfelt confession the week before about how he’d been playing them all the same song for weeks on end, and how he felt guilty for it. He claimed it had been a necessary step in their journey toward the bigger lesson he was there to teach them. The next part of the lesson would come in the form of a new song. It would be more beautiful than any they had heard before, he promised, and it would fill their souls with immense satisfaction unlike anything they had ever experienced. It would be a tune so heavenly it would call the angels themselves down from the skies just because they’d want to hear it. It would be the culmination of their stay at Phase Two.

At the end of the sidewalk, Johnny and the adults climbed the wooden steps leading to the clearing on the top of the hill. Mr. O’Brien stood at the snack table and was staring down into the punch bowl because he’d become lost in the abyss of its bottom. He smelled like the woods because he snuck out of his dormitory each night to roll in the leaves and walk naked through the trees in the woods.

“Hey, Chuck!” said Mr. Mike greeting him. Mr. O’Brien was in no condition to answer. Mr. Mike was too busy anyhow leading Johnny and Diane into the center of the clearing where they could get a good view of the stage. They worked through the wall of colorful umbrellas because Mr. Mike insisted they not just hear the music, but that they witness the genius of Jeffrey up close and personal as he delivered his message to them through his heavenly stereo. The crowd chattered quietly as they waited patiently in the rain for Jeffrey to appear. Diane rested her head on Mr. Mike’s shoulder and closed her eyes.

“My head still hurts,” she said.

“It’s almost time, Diane. Don’t worry,” he said, patting her tenderly on the head. Johnny wedged himself a little more toward the front so he could get a clear view of the stage through the crowd in front of him.

“He’s almost here!” he shouted back at Diane and Mr. Mike. The crowd gasped as a hatch in the stage floor opened and the top of Jeffrey’s head rose up into view. The crowd stirred as Jeffrey sat on a stool atop a small platform that was being lifted higher and higher. His ascent into the sky was intended to be nothing short of majestic. Jeffrey hunchered over the large stereo resting on his lap. He smiled and waved to the crowd, which made them cheer wildly. He was a grizzly man, but had a sincere smile nonetheless. His platform came to rest a full ten feet above the stage. A tall stand with a microphone on top was brought out onto the stage by a helper and placed in front of him.
“Hello!” he said into the microphone, his voice spreading over the crowd through the two large speakers sitting on both sides of the stage.

“Thanks for coming out for this special Tuesday night!” he shouted. “How’s everyone feeling tonight?” he asked. The crowd went wild. “Well, that’s just great, you guys,” he said, when their cheering quieted. “You know, I can’t tell you how happy I am to be here right now! I love life, and I love you all!”

“We love you!” Mr. Mike called out, cupping his hands over his mouth like a megaphone. The crowd cheered again. Johnny saw the woman standing next to him pop a pill into her mouth. She had been screaming like a teenage girl at a rock concert the entire time. This was it. Jeffrey’s arms lifted high into the air to calm the crowd. They braced themselves for the beauty they were about to bear witness to. Diane stared out over the distant mountains, back toward the city. The sun was setting beautifully.

“I want you all to know how hard I’ve worked on this week’s song,” Jeffrey whispered into the microphone. “I put my entire heart into it, so it would speak to each and every one of you, and bring the angels down. I’m gonna go ahead and play it for you now, if we can all get real quiet.” He placed his index finger over his lips, encouraging the crowd to fall silent, and kept it there until everyone was still. When the moment felt right, he raised a finger high into the air before dropping it suddenly to push the “play” button on his stereo. His face lit up as the tape began to roll silently. The crowd listened carefully, all of them with their eyes closed tightly in reverence, all except Diane, who was still looking out over the mountains that reminded her of home. A long while passed, and when no music played, Johnny and Mr. Mike opened their eyes. There sat Jeffrey, sitting high above them on his stool, playing air guitar in silence. On his face was a big, stupid, smile.

“Can you hear it? Let that lovely song fill your heart with love today. Let the experience take you,” he whispered into the microphone. “I put my entire heart into it, so it would speak to each and every one of you, and bring the angels down. I’m gonna go ahead and play it for you now, if we can all get real quiet.” He placed his index finger over his lips, encouraging the crowd to fall silent, and kept it there until everyone was still. When the moment felt right, he raised a finger high into the air before dropping it suddenly to push the “play” button on his stereo. His face lit up as the tape began to roll silently. The crowd listened carefully, all of them with their eyes closed tightly in reverence, all except Diane, who was still looking out over the mountains that reminded her of home. A long while passed, and when no music played, Johnny and Mr. Mike opened their eyes. There sat Jeffrey, sitting high above them on his stool, playing air guitar in silence. On his face was a big, stupid, smile.

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But Johnny’s eyes had slowly peeled open, Mr. Mike’s had shot up, and Diane’s had rolled back into focus, as a common thought bound them together in breathless realization. Jeffrey, their almighty spiritual teacher and guide, Jeffrey the Holy, Jeffrey the Wise, had gone completely and undoubtedly mad.

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Maryam returned home a short time later, accompanied by several women who followed Maryam into the kitchen and settled down for a chat and a cup of tea.

“That was a great speech, Maryam! I think your nomination as our representative in the Women’s Caucus is paying off,” one of them said.

Maryam was pleased.

“Queen Farah was smiling at you the entire time!” another lady commented.

“It will be good for women teachers to have strong representation,” Maryam said. “I hope Her Majesty heeds our request.”

“She will.”

“If I get selected, I shall do my best to make our concerns heard.”

The Women’s Caucus had twelve members and was chaired by Queen Farah, who only attended their meetings during the opening of the annual meeting and when there was a visiting foreign dignitary; otherwise, Her Majesty would assign one of her aides to attend in her place. Maryam had been on the board of the National Organization of Women Teachers for several years; her colleagues liked her because she was bold and well informed about women’s rights and issues. In meetings she was always firm, polite and accurate.

Parviz and Tooraj came later that evening to visit Cyrus. Habib had been reading the newspaper in the kitchen, but immediately invited them to the living room for cocktails. Knowing that Habib’s early evening drink was vodka with Coke, Parviz and Tooraj asked for the same. Tooraj went upstairs and persuaded Cyrus to join them.

Habib was the only one who didn’t approve of Cyrus’s improvised poems.

“This is prose, my man, not poetry. A poem should have rhyme and rhythm, sound and harmony, not just words arranged into irregular and broken lines.”

Tooraj defended his friend’s version. “Well, to me it sounds like a rhapsody, and I think it’s great!” Parviz also liked the new poems and offered a toast to poetry.

Tooraj immediately expanded it: “Let us forget about all pagans, prophets, goddesses and goddesses and drink to life!”

Habib joined them in the toast to life; even if he did not like the poems, he always liked a friendly drink.

Parviz contemplated Cyrus thoughtfully. “Let me offer you, my dear younger brother, some free advice. It would be wise for you to leave a little room for God, just in case we’re all wrong and there is such a creature in the universe.” He continued, “Have you ever wondered whether all these millions of people who believe in Him could be right? Who knows, God may be up there in Heaven right now, hearing your rebellious comments and writing notes about you.”

Tooraj, an agnostic, Jew was surprised by Parviz’s speculation. “Are you saying that we ought to leave the door to Heaven ajar and make some room in our mind for a belief in God?”

“Well, I’m not worried at all,” Cyrus waved them off. “Who are you referring to? To a heroic entity, or an enormous force that can create, manage, and lead this colossal and immeasurable universe?”

“I’m talking about an entity that is enormous in power and gigantic in size,” Parviz said.

Cyrus laughed. “Then He is so powerful and so busy with running the gargantuan universe that our actions are meaningless to him. After all, He must be pragmatic, mathematical, and frugal in order to manage this vast world successfully. In that case, I’ll bet you that your suppositional God is democratic and will respect differing opinions. And if I were wrong about Him, He would come down from Heaven to the solitude and darkness of my grave, sit next to me, introduce himself, and enlighten me. He wouldn’t punish anyone, not even for saluting idols; after all, they were His predecessors, His ancestors.”

Amused by Cyrus’s theory, Tooraj declared him a winner in this debate, and offered a new salute: “Let’s drink to life again, to life, to life, L’Chaim.”

Habib laughed out loud. “But let’s also drink to God, the creator of the universe who is powerful, kind, liberal; and who respects the opinions of all His creatures, including Cyrus, Parviz, Tooraj and me!”

Two days before Cyrus’s scheduled departure from Tehran, Cyrus went with Bahram to the Passport Office of the Foreign Ministry to obtain his exit permit. Cyrus had become an American citizen several years ago. Although it was not a crime for Iranians to become citizens of other countries, they could only enter the country with their Iranian passport, and needed an exit permit to leave. At the Passport Office he presented his airline ticket, his Iranian passport and a completed form requesting an exit permit. An official reviewed the documents, leafed through the passport, and saw the visa to Hungary that had caused Cyrus so much grief and trouble in the past. But the note from the Iranian immigration official clipped to one of the passport pages saved Cyrus renewed interrogation.

“Go to the Airport Police Office two hours before your departure time to pick up your passport,” the official said.

“How about the exit permit?” Cyrus asked.

“If it gets approved, it will be in the passport.”

“Do you anticipate any problems?”

The official scrutinized the passport pages again and pointed to the visa to Hungary. “What was your reason to go there?”

“To attend a medical meeting.”

Cyrus pulled out another copy of his certificate of attendance at the medical meeting in Budapest and gave it to the official.

“That should be fine. You’ll leave Iran without a hitch.” He placed the note in the passport. “It is normal procedure for us to keep your passport until the day of your departure.”

Bahram maneuvered the car through the heavy traffic but got stuck between two large diesel trucks which were spewing black smoke in the air. The thick and nauseating smoke entered, forcing Bahram to roll up the windows. Cyrus was coughing, and his head began to throb. He pulled two tablets of coated aspirin from his pocket and swallowed them dry.

Bahram observed him and said, “Doc, one of these days you will have a big ulcer. Let me stop and get you some water.”

It took them some time to find a place to buy a bottle of Pepsi. “They shouldn’t let these diesel trucks enter the city streets.” Cyrus couldn’t reply because of another paroxysm of coughing.

“You have become really tolerant of officious behavior. I expected you to raise hell back there in that office. How many times should they harass you about that old Hungarian trip?” Bahram
said, angrily. “This passport business is embarrassing! You see why we need a better government.”

Cyrus said, “It doesn’t bother me anymore. I’m used to it.”

“Well, it bothers me. No country in the world is as restrictive as Iran!”

“Believe me, it is not as bad here as in some other countries I have visited.”

“What countries are you talking about? There is no way conditions elsewhere can be worse than here.”

Cyrus explained, “Restrictions are worse in the Soviet Union and in East Germany. In the Soviet Union, for example, freedom of the press and individual rights are much more limited than here in Iran. For an ordinary citizen of the Soviet Union, it is almost impossible to travel abroad.”

Bahram’s face reflected his disbelief. “How can you know that?” he asked.

“I’ve been there and I have seen it! And it is even worse in East Germany. People die crossing the wall that divides the city of Berlin. They get shot attempting to escape from East Germany.”

Bahram refused to accept Cyrus’s description of the conditions behind the Iron Curtain; he was certain nothing could be worse than the oppression in Iran.

Heavy traffic forced their car to inch its way slowly toward the intersection of Pahlavi and Takht-Jamshid Streets. Smoke and fumes entered their car again, rekindling Cyrus’s cough. Despite the aspirin his headache had intensified and he was feeling nauseated.

“They need to do something about the pollution as well,” Bahram said, “Surely you will at least agree that all of it is the Shah’s fault.”

They both laughed. Bahram parked near a café on Pahlavi Ave. “Let’s have a cup of coffee. Shirin is supposed to meet me here.”

Cyrus felt the full force of his migraine and needed to get out of the traffic fumes, so he welcomed the break. Anyhow, he had no plans until dinnertime. “Great idea! I would certainly enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat with you and Shirin.”

They locked the car, crossed a wooden passage over the narrow stream of water between the rows of maple trees, and entered a small café packed with young students. They found a table near the window overlooking the sidewalk. A waiter brought them the afternoon menu that offered tea, coffee, sodas, ice cream, and pastries, and they both ordered coffee.

Bahram was puzzled by Cyrus’s statements about the Soviet Union. He was sure life in the Soviet Union was quite different from Cyrus’s description. “Cyrus, I think you have been brainwashed by the American propaganda machine,” he said. “Life in the Soviet Union is much freer than you say.”

“Believe me,” Cyrus said. “I’m speaking from experience. I’ve been there myself and was shocked by Communism in action. It’s totally different from what you read in Communist publications.”

Bahram was astonished. “How did you visit Moscow? You couldn’t go with an Iranian passport, unless you had special approval from the Foreign Ministry.”

“I went with a group of American physicians to tour medical facilities and attend a health care seminar in Moscow. We visited Kiev and St. Petersburg, too,” Cyrus said. “As an American citizen, I can go anywhere in the world except to one or two hostile countries.”

Bahram was eager to hear more; his questions poured out rapidly. “How was Moscow? Did you meet any Russian students? What did you talk about with the Russians you met?”

“What surprised me the most was that every student I met asked me for help to leave the Soviet Union and come to the U.S.”

“I don’t understand why they would want to leave!” Bahram exclaimed. “They live in a country with true liberty and economic equality. Freedom without economic equality is not really freedom. Why would they be interested in moving to the U.S.?”

“The majority of Russian students seemed more interested in our American life-style than in Communism. People openly expressed their criticism of the Soviet government; they were tired of coping with the frequent shortages of food and many daily necessities. And they definitely do not enjoy freedom of the press.”

“Did you meet any members of the Communist Party?”

“I am not sure, but our tour guides were government employees and probably members of the party.”

“What did they talk about?”

“Every single one of them approached one or more members of our group and sought their help to get a visa to the U.S. They would gladly pay their life savings to get an immigration visa to the U.S.”

Bahram couldn’t believe that Cyrus was painting a true picture of Soviet society. His political mentors had taught him that every Soviet citizen enjoyed social and economic freedom and justice. Now, he insisted on repeating what he had heard: “There is no upper-class or boss in Soviet society. Nobody owns anything and there is no unemployment. Everybody has access to free education and health care.”

As he spoke, it became clear that Bahram held an image of Soviet society as an ideal community, a utopia rimmed with love and peace, where the grass was always green, the meadows covered with large fragrant red flowers, gardens filled with roses and rosemary, and people who looked healthy and content, beautiful and strong. In Bahram’s version of Soviet society nobody was poor, sick, or old. No one died of illness or suffered from hunger or malnutrition. There was total equality with music and poetry in every neighborhood. Bahram envisioned that community was better than Heaven.

Cyrus was astonished by Bahram’s naïve view of the outside world, especially his ignorance of the realities of life in Communist countries.

“Bahram, you are getting absolutely wrong information. I was there and saw it with my own eyes. Even their best medical clinics lacked basic medications; their examination tables were scrap lumber from World Wars I and II. The rate of postoperative infection in the Soviet Union is higher than in many developing countries,” Cyrus said. “In some ways, you have access to better medicine here in Iran than most people in the Soviet Union.”

“Only under Communism can an ideal society exist,” Bahram insisted. “Economic equality produces true democracy.”

“When you find one call me,” Cyrus said. “It is certainly not in the Soviet Union.”

“When the government eliminates private ownership of land and factories and lets workers and farmers manage everything themselves, then justice, happiness, and liberty will prevail.”

“Look, private ownership of farms and factories was abolished decades ago when Stalin was ruling the Soviet Union, but now...
nobody has any incentive to work hard and move the country forward,” Cyrus said. He wanted to elaborate more on the value of individual ownership and its effect on productivity but decided to halt this fruitless discussion. It was obvious that Bahram’s brain was totally soaked in Marxism and would accept neither arguments nor data.

“You talk like a genuine capitalist,” Bahram ridiculed Cyrus. “I chose to go to America, and after I lived there for almost six years I chose to become an American citizen. It’s one of my rights to choose where I want to live. I love the American Constitution; it talks about life, liberty, and happiness, not about hatred and vengeance. It’s not a perfect society, but it’s an exciting country with lots of things to do. You are free to participate in sports, visit museums, attend concerts, or play chess in the park, and no matter what age you are, go to academy and get more education. It’s really fun to live in America.”

“Nonsense! You can’t buy happiness in the market.”

“But you have the constitutional right to pursue it,” Cyrus said. This concept was new to Bahram, so new that he thought it was silly to specify a citizen’s right to pursue happiness in his country’s constitution. He thought happiness was a very private and personal matter and could not be manufactured. “How can the U.S. or for that matter any government produce happiness?” he asked Cyrus.

“The U.S. government doesn’t provide happiness. The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right of its citizens to pursue happiness, and that comes from being free, as free as a fish in an ocean, or a bird in the clear blue sky.”

Bahram looked at his watch and wondered when Shirin was going to show up. Tired of the political conversation, he asked Cyrus about his family and finally wondered, “Are you really happy living in Texas?”

“Of course I am. Otherwise I would have packed my belongings and moved elsewhere. Look, you can find all elements of American life in Texas, from centers of high culture to rodeos and dude ranches to noisy sports arenas. You can choose your hobby from hunting or fishing to writing and reading, playing golf or tennis, or any other endeavor. The Texas economy, similar to Iran’s, is strongly tied to the petroleum industry. The oil wells on many ranches are privately owned. Like Iran, Texas has a varied climate and lots of friendly people.”

Bahram had another sip of coffee and looked at his watch again. “Shirin should be here any time now,” he smiled. “Shirin and I have become good friends. I like her mother, but I can’t stand her father. He is a real bourgeois and owns a big construction company in Tehran. As a hard-working fellow who has done well economically, he naturally supports the policies of this government.”

“Then don’t talk politics with him.”

“He is very unfriendly to me, hostile to my opinions and hates to see me around his house.”

“How does Shirin manage this problem?”

“She is independent and doesn’t let her father get involved in our relationship.”

“She must be a very courageous person.”

“It’s not that hard. Her mother likes me a lot. Her mother tells me, ‘Please don’t talk politics in our house.’” Bahram was looking through the window and saw Shirin approaching the café, passing the bridge over the fast-flowing stream.

“Here she is.” Bahram waved and Shirin smiled cheerfully as she joined them. The waiter brought more coffee and cake for the three of them. When Shirin finished her coffee, she looked into the empty cup with great interest. She tilted and rocked the cup in a circular way and seemed absorbed by the different swirls of thick coffee at the bottom.

Cyrus was amused and asked her, “What are you doing?”

“I am reading the cup because I want to see what the future has in store for us.”

Cyrus laughed, “You are funny, Shirin! Now I understand why you like socialism so much. You have probably seen it in the bottom of your cup.”

They chuckled companionably.

Shirin had turned quiet, suddenly. Then she whispered, “I am seeing something here.” She looked closer and added softly, “I see an image.”

Bahram says, “Are you seeing me?”

“No, I am seeing Cyrus. I see him climbing a mountain and falling into a deep ravine.”

Cyrus was astonished. “That’s a big picture for such a little cup.”

Bahram was now perturbed by the comment and looked Cyrus straight in the face. “This is not as trivial as you think. Shirin sees a lot of images and they always sound beautiful and poetic, but not today.”

“Do you see anything else?” Cyrus asked Shirin.

“I see you are walking again, trying to get back to the pass.”

“I am glad Cyrus is still alive,” Bahram said.

“Am I limping?” Cyrus asked.

“That’s all I see,” Shirin said. “I cannot see anything else.”

“It Had to Be You.” The Western music in the coffee shop was one of Billie Holiday’s songs. Cyrus looked around and saw young couples talking intimately, looking into each other’s eyes, holding each other’s hands. Bahram and Shirin were sitting closer together, and Cyrus saw they were enjoying the music. He thought it was time for him to leave, leave these two lovebirds alone.

He got up. “Good bye, my friends. I’ll take a taxi to Maryam’s house.”

Shirin objected. “Don’t go yet, I have brought you a gift.”

“Please, just wait a second,” Bahram said.

“This is from both of us.” Shirin handed him one book titled The Garden of Mirrors, a recent anthology by Ahmad Shamloo. Then she gave him a second book and said, “This one is by a female poet who wrote in free verse; this author is my favorite poet. She was killed in a car accident when she was still very young. She was courageous, sensational, and wild, and her verses are romantic and very meaningful. I just love her poems because she wrote so expressively about the desires and fantasies of women.”

In the taxi Cyrus leaned back and casually leafed through the books. It had been a long day and when he finally entered Maryam’s house, he was still suffering from a pounding headache. In the room, he took some migraine medication, turned off the lights, and went to bed. The dark, quiet room and a capsule of Darvocet brought some relief, and soon Cyrus was asleep.
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Bonnie Lyons’s first full-length book of poems, In Other Words, was published by Pecan Grove Press in 2004. Her chapbooks, Hineni (2003) and Meanwhile (2005), were both published by Finishing Line Press. She is also the author of Henry Roth: The Man and His Work and co-author of Passion and Craft, interviews with fiction writers. A professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio, she has received teaching, creative writing, and research awards from the university. She has taught as a Fulbright professor at the Aristotelian University in Thessaloniki and at the Central and Autonómia Universities in Barcelona, and has also been a Fulbright lecturer in Athens, Rome, Florence, Haifa, and Tel Aviv.

Presence by Scott Wiggerman

Presence is Scott Wiggerman’s second volume of poetry, the long-awaited follow-up to Vegetables and Other Relationships. Wiggerman is the chief editor of Dos Gatos Press in Austin, where he has co-edited the annual Texas Poetry Calendar for the past seven years. He has also edited Big Land, Big Sky, Big Hair, an anthology of Texas-themed poetry, and recently co-edited Wingbeats: Exercises and Practice in Poetry, a collection of poetry-writing exercises from teaching poets across the country.

The Names They Found There by Kurt Heinzelman

Kurt Heinzelman co-founded and for ten years edited the award-winning journal The Poetry Miscellany; he is currently editor-at-large for the Bat City Review as well as editor-in-chief of Texas Studies in Literature and Language (TSSL). He has been a multiple nominee for the Pushcart Prize; his first two books of poetry, The Halfway Tree (2000) and Black Butterflies (2004), were both finalists for Poetry Book of the Year from the Texas Institute of Letters. A scholar and translator, he also serves on the Board of Directors of the Dylan Thomas Prize in Swansea, Wales. He lives in Austin, Texas with his wife, Susan Sage Heinzelman.

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Indios
by Linda Hogan

Indios is set “in the timelessness of our lives,” writes Linda Hogan. “Time is different in the cell structure of bodies created from and on this continent.” Indios speaks to us the truth of a history twisted to suit the needs of a conquering power. It is an old story and yet a tragically contemporary one. Indios, the character, speaks to us from a jail cell, a Native woman falsely accused of the death of her children. In her plight we hear echoes of Malinche, cursed and blessed as both a race traitor and as the mother of all mestizos. We hear echoes of Pocahontas, of La Llorona, and ultimately, of Medea—not, Hogan stresses, the Medea of Euripides, but the captured princess of the original story in which her children were murdered by the people of Corinth—and Medea herself was feared for her cultural differences and her knowledge. As Indios says of herself, she is an “afterershock” of history. This powerful poem is her legacy.

Crazy Love
by Pamela Uschuk

As If The Empty Chair / Como si la silla vacia
by Margaret Randall

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La Cantera Barnes & Noble
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Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2012 43
Poetry & Art Events

San Antonio Recurring Venues

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


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


Tuesdays 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.

Every Fourth Wednesday – Barnes & Noble, The Shops at La Cantera, 15900 La Cantera Parkway, Bldg. 27, San Antonio, TX 78256. Host: Voices de la Luna: 6 PM – Poetry Workshop / 7 PM Featured Guest / 8 PM – Open Mic.


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 1-3 pm – San Antonio Poets Association – Monthly at Bethany Congregational Church – 500 Pilgrim Dr.

Book Readings/Signings

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200 E Grayson, Ste. 124, Pearl Brewery, San Antonio, TX (210) 826-6411; http://thetwig.booksense.com

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At the McNay Art Museum

Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2012