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“Little Sister” by Robert Bonazzi
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No Winner of Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2012
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Poetry Editor’s Note
Carol Coffee Reposa

I have been thinking lately of Shakespeare, the Bright Shawl, Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin, and the number 236. These topics are not as miscellaneous as they seem, for all are tied one way or another to this issue of Voices de la Luna. For starters, the Voices family gratefully acknowledges the many who gave of their time, talent, and treasure to make last April’s Evening of Lawful Literates a night to savor, not just for its luminous energy but for its generous investment in the future of this journal. And for that blessing, Shakespeare says it best: “(We) can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks.”

Then there’s the number 236, the birthday our nation will mark this July 4th and another cause for rejoicing. We Americans generally look forward to this holiday, and the Voices de la Luna staff is no exception. To celebrate the occasion, we have dedicated this issue to the themes of freedom and independence. Most of us also observe the Fourth with backyard barbeques, fireworks, and parades, but when it comes to exercising the primary right for which the War of Independence was waged, our commemoration is often “more honored in the breach than the observance” (Shakespeare again). It is rare, even in a presidential election year like this one, for 50% of eligible voters to cast their ballots, and turnout is even lower in off-year, state, and local elections. In San Antonio’s recent bond election, for example, only 7% of registered voters showed up at the polls. True, Murphy’s Law often operates on election day. We put in long hours at the workplace and then do four or five necessary errands. Then and only then do we make it to the polls to stand in long, weary lines before we finally mark our ballots. But that’s why we have absentee and early voting, and even if we did not, one day of inconvenience is a small price to pay for the benefits gained. The Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate indisputably the value of the vote to those who lack it. Nor can we argue that one vote doesn’t matter. In the presidential election of 1960, one of the closest in American history, John Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon by about 129,000 votes in a total tally of 68,329,141. JFK’s margin of victory was a pencil-thin two tenths of one percent. Thomas Paine, who well understood the necessity of voter activism, writes in The American Crisis, “Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men [and women, we hope] undergo the fatigue of supporting it.” Somewhere in the patriotic ether where Revolutionary heroes go, he must be chanting this line morning, noon, and night. I bet it’s his mantra, and it should be ours too.

As Benjamin Franklin was leaving Independence Hall at the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a citizen accosted him and asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got—a Republic or a Monarchy?” Franklin famously replied, “A Republic, if you can keep it.”
Cover Page Art

The Glow of Your Face
by Ramin Samandari

Ramin Samandari has exhibited his photographic work in major galleries locally, nationally, and in Europe. The Glow of Your Face has been noted for its remarkable depth of imagination and technical prowess. Samandari says, “The human form in relation to other forms, space, and the intangible forces of time, place, and history are the primary concerns that fuel my work. As an artist working in the image-based media, I approach the making of photographs as a means to document my philosophical, artistic and personal examination of life.”

The cover page art was selected from a series of images presented at Gallery Nord last fall. The series is the result of his ongoing fascination with and spiritual connection to some of the landscapes around San Antonio. Enchanted Rock, the Pedernales River, and the Guadalupe River are the backdrops for this collection, which is called Earthly Bodies, whether in the form of a human figure or an isolated tree or rock.

Ramin Samandari, born in 1960 in Tehran, emigrated from Iran to the United States in 1978 and makes his home in San Antonio. He is a versatile artist and educator working with photographic and digital imaging processes.

In Memorium Stewart Klein
10 February 1924 - 15 May 2012

Stewart Klein, a graduate of the Franklin Institute of Design and the Pratt Art League in New York City, died in San Antonio on 15 May 2012. Klein painted the striking image of the full moon rising over the sea, framed by the rock walls of a natural inlet. The painting, owned by Mo and Brigitte Saidi, is used as the logo of Voices de la Luna.

Klein was a successful graphic designer, artist, and painter, and he was honored with many awards over the course of his long and productive life. He was recently commissioned to create oil paintings of the Alamo, Mission Concepción, and Mission Espada to hang in the president’s suite at Texas A&M University - San Antonio.

Preceded in death by his wife of 50+ years, Rosalie Leibow Klein, he is survived by his companion Hannelore Hallinger and many family members of multiple generations.
Robert Bonazzi is the author of the critically-acclaimed Man in the Mirror, a biography of Black Like Me author John Howard Griffin (1920-1980); Scattered Shadows: A Memoir of Blindness and Vision (Orbis, 2004); Street of the Seven Angels (a novel) (Wings, 2003); and Encounters with the Other (essays) (Latitudes, 1997). He edited Griffin’s Follow the Ecstasy: The Hermitage Years of Thomas Merton (Orbis 1993). His works on Griffin have appeared in the New York Times, Bloomsbury Review, Motive, New Orleans Review, Southwest Review, Texas Observer, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, and The Historical Dictionary of Civil Rights. He has published three books of poetry: Living the Borrowed Life, Fictive Music, and Perpetual Texts. His essays, stories, and poems have appeared in 200 publications in France, Germany, the UK, Japan, Canada, Peru, Mexico, and the US, as well as in 22 anthologies, and in publications like Transatlantic Review (London), TriQuarterly, Minnesota Review, Chelsea, New Letters, Mississippi Review, Village Voice, National Catholic Reporter, Library Journal, Excelsior (Mexico City), and more. Bonazzi is a member of the Authors Guild.

Voices Fundraiser
Voices Annual Literary Event at the Bright Shawl
Wednesday 11 April 2012

To celebrate National Poetry Month and the installation of Carmen Tafolla as San Antonio’s first poet laureate, and to support Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine, over 120 San Antonians attended our fourth annual fundraiser. The master of ceremonies, Michael J. Burke, called the event to order and thanked the co-chairs of the event, Joel and Valerie Katz, for their diligent effort, saying, “Voices de la Luna plays an essential literary and artistic role in San Antonio. We strive to continue publishing the magazine in four formats, stage poetry and prose venues, present monthly poetry readings and arts workshops for youth, high school students, homeless people, and inmates at the Bexar County Detention Center, and we offer a platform to publish poetry, prose, and graphic arts from local writers and artists.”

Mo H Saidi spoke on behalf of the staff and editors of Voices, thanking the board members and especially the chair, Mike Burke, for their leadership and support of the organization. He said, “To celebrate poetry and literature here in San Antonio, on 4 April 2012 in front of a packed city hall, Mayor Julián Castro presented San Antonio’s Inaugural Poet Laureate for 2012 and 2013, Dr. Carmen Tafolla.” Saidi introduced Dr. Tafolla and invited her to the podium to speak, recite, and perform.

Dr. Tafolla is internationally acclaimed as a writer, poet, performer, educational consultant, and renowned folklorist of the Chicanx/Mexican-American community. Her work has appeared in over 200 anthologies; she has performed her one-woman show “My Heart Speaks a Different Language” all over the world. Among her many awards, Dr. Tafolla counts one rare honor: the Americas Award from the Congress of the United States. She currently teaches at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies.

After Dr. Tafolla’s performance, which received a standing ovation, Mike Burke introduced the Honorable Susan D. Reed, District Attorney of San Antonio. DA Reed spoke of the vital role of poetry in America and then introduced the Lawful Literate winners, Darby Riley, Floyd L. Lamrouex, and Jeff Akins, who came to the podium to receive their awards and read their poems. After the successful auction of vacations in Berlin and at Medina Lake, Jim Brandenburg spoke of the role of poetry in healing minds and described how arts advance the quality of life in the community.

During the second half of the program, the a capella duo Ethics Follies—Sherry Gibbs Houston and Lee Cusenbary—performed and sang “Memory” from Cats and lyrics from T. S. Eliot’s poems “Prelude” and “Rhapsody on a Windy Night,” concluding their part of the program with a rendition of “Tonight” from West Side Story.

At the conclusion of the literary event, the keynote speaker, the Honorable Catherine M. Stone, Chief Justice of the Fourth Court of Appeals, gave an eloquent speech regarding law and literature. She spoke of major poets who were also lawyers and read selected poems from Wallace Stevens and Longfellow.

In his closing remarks, Mike Burke thanked Dr. Tafolla, Justice Stone, and DA Reed for participating in the Voices event and the audience for attending the event and supporting poetry and arts in San Antonio.
Questions for Naomi Shihab Nye
Dialogue with Robert Bonazzi

Naomi Shihab Nye’s latest book of poems, *Transfer* (BOA Editions, 2011), is the focus of this brief dialogue. She was born in St. Louis, lived in Jerusalem, and shares a San Antonio home with husband Michael Nye, the documentary photographer, and son Madison, a grad student at Johns Hopkins. She graduated from Lee High School and Trinity University, has authored (or edited) 32 books in various genres for all ages, and works as a wandering poet in countless schools and communities in many countries. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems from the Middle East* was a finalist for the National Book Award, and two of her books were recognized by the Jane Addams Peace Association’s Children’s Book Awards. In the fall of 2011 Nye was visiting professor at the Michener Center for Writers, UT-Austin. Aziz Shihab’s memoir of Palestine, *Does the Land Remember Me?* (2007) was reissued in paperback by Syracuse University Press in 2011.

Robert Bonazzi: In *Transfer* you focus primarily on the loving relationship with your late father, Aziz Shihab, who has been the “subject” of poems in previous collections. The loss of a parent tends to be a primal event, and these poems track a deep grieving which—despite the claims of clinicians as to the “stages of grief”—follow no prescribed pattern. What was your strategy for sequencing? Were the poems placed chronologically-as-written, or were finished texts arranged later? Was your arrangement accomplished by a conscious method or by an intuitive aesthetic?

Naomi Shihab Nye: Definitely intuitive arrangement, on the floor, page by page, later. It would have been impossible to structure a sequencing beforehand, and chronological arrangement would be peculiar at best. The poems wanted to move, in the second part of the book, back into the world, which for me was entirely changed by my father’s new absence and deeper presence. We always look for a harmony among individual pieces—no?—a fluent current of thinking giving them new relationships, one to another.

The second section of *Transfer* (“Just Call Me Aziz”) contains eleven poems that take their titles from lines in your father’s notebooks. Unlike your other elegies about him, wherein the first-person narrator usually represents your voice, these seem to actually inhabit his voice, giving the convincing sense that Aziz had written them. We know you wrote the poems, but to what degree do they derive from recollections of his stories and the way he told them? His voice inhabits my memory and ear so strongly that simply using his own floating lines as titles invited his voice to take over. This wasn’t planned beforehand—it just happened while writing. Aziz was skeptical of adjectives, as journalists often are, so the poems in his voice have fewer of those than my own might have. He loved short sentences and blunt diction. Writing this section made me laugh. I found things out. It was comforting to feel his own voice emerging so easily—I wouldn’t mind writing more poems of this kind. Guess it’s another way to keep that conversation going—as Alastair Reid mentioned [in an epigraph to Nye’s “Introduction”]. My father left a lot of scrappy notebooks, after all. Many more titles awaiting….

All cultures have story-telling traditions—from oral history to literature—and since your narrative poems and Aziz’s autobiographical texts about his exile from Palestine were often created from actual events—can we assume that you place great value upon story-telling, especially stories generated through the Palestinian culture?

Without a doubt, I do. No one can deny your story. Or, the way you remember what you describe as your story. They may argue with your opinion, but not your story.

Since only recently are we hearing the long-silenced Palestinian narrative spoken in its own voice (by Abbas at the UN, through peaceful demonstrations throughout the Arab world, and in the overdue international awareness of the effects of the Israeli occupation), do you sense new possibilities for human rights, self-determination, and peace in these developments?

Definitely I do. And it is long, long overdue. And everyone with a moderate, reasonable sensibility in any country hopes for it—Palestinians and Israeli Jews and everyone who cares about balance in the region and mutual respect. As a local friend said to me years ago about what happened to the Palestinians (the whole “spin” to disbelieve or minimize or justify all the injustices against them), “How did anyone ever think this would work out?”

Your third section includes diverse poems—several that focus on anecdotes about Aziz, others which have no literal connection but become suddenly touched by strophes of grief—all in a sense “informed” by Jack Ridl’s epigraph that reads, “Grief is an ambush. You’re walking along feeling fine, look down, see a leaf, and begin to weep.” Does this quote capture the resonance of these poems on Palestinian children, a lost dog in your neighborhood, the lovely meditation on language (in “Maximum Security”), the homage to poet William Stafford, and those “invisible” worlds represented by fish in a Dubai aquarium? Since grief appears randomly, unexpectedly, and painfully in places with no direct bearing on your father, was the sense of loss symbolically projected upon these other experiences, or did the connections emerge unbidden?

Unbidden, definitely. It’s the gift of poetry that helps us see—allows threads to be stitched among disparate details, experiences, moments. I was staying at the San Jose Hotel in Austin—a favorite hotel—but was feeling deeply lonely for my dad. Kind friends showed up with a thermos of white tea. That same night, Jack’s quote floated in and carried me for months. His own knowing helped life feel bearable again. Grief carries us into that new country of citizenship where no one is denied a passport. Checkpoints? Ha! Like, every day. We find ways to go on. Sentences can help a lot. Since childhood, I never thought we give enough credit to simple sentences.
Throughout this truthful and vulnerable book, Naomi Shihab Nye focuses on losing her beloved father (Aziz Shihab) and reflects on the mysteriously shifting sands of grief. “Missing him contains moments so intense,” says her Introduction, “I don’t know how I will continue.” Yet these elegies of dislocation—as emotionally complex and raw as grief itself—discover ways to continue.

In “1935”: “You’re 8 in the photograph, / standing behind a table of men / dipping bread in hummus. // You spoke inside / my head the moment before I saw it. / Now the picture hangs beside my desk, holding / layered lost worlds where / you are, not only the person I knew / but the person before the person I knew, / in your universe, your life’s possible story / still smiling.”

“Scared, Scarred, Sacred” begins: “Daddy! What’s that ticket / in your hand? Our transfer.” Later, “he felt safer traveling, wanting to be elsewhere, / restless, gone.” Yet he always “dreamed of doing something great / for peace, international healing, / but argued with people close by….” More questions: “When do we get there? / That place we are going? / What have we hauled along? / It was too much, wasn’t it?” No answers, except that “all your life you were flying back to your lost life.”

Transfer alludes to the life journey we all take and to her father’s “transfer” after the eviction from his mother’s house in Jerusalem during the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948—a subject “we didn’t talk about often / because it was like a person who had died in another country / and we had never been able to wash the body.” In “The Only Democracy in the Middle East,” Nye writes: “Israeli soldiers order Palestinians to ‘leave your house immediately. / Do not call it a home. / This is our home not yours. / Security demands it. // Stand over there, against the rubble, where you belong.”

Shihab left Palestine for Kansas, where he married Miriam (a painter), then on to her hometown in St. Louis. Eventually they came to San Antonio, where he worked for the Express-News. When her parents moved on to Dallas, the poet made her home here, later marrying documentary photographer Michael Nye and starting their own family.

The writings of father and daughter emerge from a rich story-telling tradition that Nye combines in a dozen poems which take their titles from Shihab’s notebooks. One particularly charming text in “his” voice (“When One Is So Far from Home, Life Is a Mix of Fact and Fiction”) begins: “No one should hold that against you. / It’s a means of survival. / Sometimes I thought my best talent was / taking a skinny story, adding wings and a tale. / Dressing it in a woolen Bedouin cloak / with stitching around the edges.”

His stories become touching memories, retold without sentimentality. “Where Are You Now?” opens with “my head on the pillow / where you told your last folktale, / mixing donkey, camel, mouse, / journey, kitchen, trees, / so the story grew jumbled…”

She “listened from the other small bed // remembering two and four and six / when this voice calmed me every night, / thinking, how will I live without this voice?” But the poem recovers, as his tale returns “to the comforting donkey, bucket of olives, / smoke curling up from twig fire / over which anyone, a lost girl, a wanderer, a dying man, / could warm his hands.”

An exiled diplomat for peace, Shihab returned to Palestine often and wrote two books—A Taste of Palestine, childhood vignettes (1993), and Does the Land Remember Me?, a memoir of Palestine, published four months before his death, in 2007. Sharing his nonviolent philosophy and also recognized as a peace advocate, Nye has published poems about Palestine in every book, including 19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East (2002), a National Book Award finalist. Their voices remain lucid, sane, and rebellious in questioning humanity’s blind prejudices and tragic wars while calling for peace.

Nye makes clear in a prose epilogue—“Wavelength”—that her father will always reappear in cherished memories. “He had been the one person in my world absolutely on my wavelength, since I was little. The one whose humor made us laugh the hardest, whose quirks and commentaries rang the most bells. He sang cheerily in the shower in two languages—something better was always about to happen.”

Since Aziz Shihab’s “transfer” and his spirit’s transference into our lives, Naomi Shihab Nye has inhabited all the “stages of grief” ever postulated, but never in any conscious, clinical sense. Rather, she bares this deepest wound without self-pity and traces its gradual healing in poetry. “There’s a way not to be broken”—reads the closure of “Cinco de Mayo”—“that takes brokenness to find it.”

Telling a Story Helped Us Figure Out Who We Were

Naomi Shihab Nye
Interviewed by Judy Woodruff on 12 April 2012

When shaping verse, poet Naomi Shihab Nye reflects on her Palestinian heritage, her family and the power of humanity. Nye discusses her most recent compilation of work, Transfer, and what continues to inspire her to craft thoughtful and expressive poems.

Naomi Shihab Nye has authored more than twenty-five volumes of poetry and won numerous awards. She was recently elected to the Board of Chancellors of the Academy of American Poets and regularly conducts writing workshops around the country for young people.

Senior English major Victor H. Hernandez Jayme claimed second prize and an award of $2,500 in the 2012 Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest with his essay, “The Uniformed Merchants of Death: Exploring the Role of Consumer Ethics in the War on Drugs.” In addition to being an outstanding student, Hernandez—a Mexican national—is also the Paseo Editor at UTSA’s independent student newspaper, The Paisano. Voices de la Luna editorial staff conducted a short interview with Hernandez about his award.

**Voices:** In your Wiesel Foundation paper, you argue, “Our purchasing power is the most direct tool to trigger change, and it should not only be used to foster development but first of all, to prevent suffering.” Your paper focuses on the effect of consumer spending on the War on Drugs, especially in Mexico, but beyond the War on Drugs, in what other areas is your statement applicable? How would advise your fellow students and other young adults to flex their consumer muscles in order to improve the world?

**Hernandez:** It can be very troubling to think of the processes behind all the things we buy. Not only is our information limited, but being a conscientious consumer is tiresome at best and compulsive at worst. It’s nearly impossible for the educated consumer to always make the ethical choice—but this doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try. Since our purchasing power has such far-ranging consequences, it is crucial to prioritize. The question is not, “Are my actions doing any harm?” but “Where are my actions doing the most harm?” People, if they care for others, could start with the obvious: avoiding the use of drugs that foster violence is virtually a given—though it’s disturbing to know how many people buy into this system. It’s nearly impossible for the educated consumer to always make the ethical choice—but this doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try. Since our purchasing power has such far-ranging consequences, it is crucial to prioritize. The question is not, “Are my actions doing any harm?” but “Where are my actions doing the most harm?” People, if they care for others, could start with the obvious: choosing to avoid buying things that foster violence is virtually a given—though it’s disturbing to know how many people buy into this system.

**What are your plans beyond graduation from UTSA? What would you like to be doing ten years from now?**

I want to be a novelist, and I hope to have my first novel done before I graduate. I hope to eventually own media outlets later in my life. I’m not entirely sure if I’ll go to grad school, but it is highly likely.

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**The National Book Critics Circle**

*Steven G. Kellman, Professor of Comparative Literature*

The National Book Critics Circle is an organization of about 600 book critics and book review editors scattered throughout the United States and as far away as New Zealand. It sponsors public events at different time of the year throughout the country, including Texas, and it maintains an informative literary blog at www.bookcritics.org. But the NBCC is probably best known for the book awards it bestows annually at an Oscar-like ceremony in each of six categories: autobiography, biography, criticism, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. It also bestows the Nona Balakian Citation for Excellence in Reviewing (a kind of Pulitzer for book critics, it was given to me in 2007) and the Ivan Sandrow Award for Lifetime Achievement (whose recipients have included Alfred Kazin, Joyce Carol Oates, John Leonard, Robert Silvers, Leslie Fiedler, and Pauline Kael).

The NBCC is governed by a 24-member board of directors, each of whom is elected by the general membership to a three-year term. The bylaws restrict service to no more than two terms each of whom is elected by the general membership to a three-year term. Among other duties, the board makes the final decisions on our annual awards—which means that in principle each of us on the board is responsible for reading every book published in the United States during a given calendar year. In practice, we divide the labor by organizing ourselves into committees that determine the five finalists in each of the six book categories. Once the finalists

*Continued on p. 10*
Oil Field Girls: After Jerry Bywaters

Steven G. Kellman

Blue skies and the open road
until an hour and a half beyond San Angelo
and the highway yields to brazen curves.
It’s not their thumbs
that make you slow the red Ford roadster,
nor even the vestal boots
that look to plant a few fresh kicks.
As stately as an oil rig
set beneath miasmic clouds,
they beckon restless wanderers
who never staked a wildcat claim.
These desperate locals travel lightly
yet do not need a map
to know which way is out.
Because it does not do to gawk,
you press your bootless foot against the gas
and hope next curve to find a Coke.

Jerry Bywaters, Oil Field Girls, 1940, oil on board, 75.3 x 62.2 cm.
Photo by Rick Hall. Used with permission.

Steven G. Kellman is the author of Redemption: The Life of Henry Roth (Norton), The Translingual Imagination (Nebraska), and The Self-Begetting Novel (Columbia) and the editor of M.E. Ravage’s 1917 memoir An American in the Making (Rutgers). He is a professor of comparative literature at the University of Texas at San Antonio.
Continued from p. 8

are named, in January, every member of the board is responsible for reading all 30 books and voting, in March, for the winner in each of the categories. For anyone who loves books, presuming to judge the best books of the year in all six categories is a lesson in humility. It is also exhilarating to sit around a large table in New York and argue about books with some of the finest critics in the land.

For my additional sins, I was elected to two successive terms as vice president of membership of the NBCC. I am responsible for the mundane task of maintaining records of our members and maintaining contact with all of them, but also for recruitment. I encourage anyone with a serious interest in book criticism—in print, electronic, or broadcast media—to consider joining. Dues for regular membership with full voting rights are $50. To encourage the future of our calling, we also offer a special student membership for only $15. Complete information on membership is available at our website, www.bookcritics.org.

Study Abroad in Urbino, Part II
Bridget Drinka, Professor of Linguistics and Chair, Department of English

Like Dr. Bernadette Andrea, who described her experiences as an instructor in the COLFA Semester in Urbino in the last issue of Voices de la Luna, I also had the pleasure of teaching a course in the program last Spring, entitled “Excavating Language: Linguistic Connections Across Latin, Italian, and English.” In the stunning setting of the Renaissance hill town of Urbino, Italy, my students and I began our exploration of the ancient roots of the Italic and Germanic languages, examining the layers of their development and the many points of contact that they shared. We examined the evidence for the common ancestor of both Italic and Germanic, that is, Proto-Indo-European, and then went on to explore the remnants of ancient Italic languages, including Umbrian, a “cousin” of Latin. Our investigation included a field trip to the town of Gubbio, ancient Iguvium, to visit the ancient bronze Iguvine Tablets, containing the most important remaining traces of that language. We went on to explore the effects of the spread of the Roman Empire—the diffusion of the Romance languages across Europe, the important role of Christianity, and the effect that Latin had on our own language at an early time. We took full advantage of our 5-day trip to Rome, visiting the Colosseum and the Forum, the Vatican, the Catacombs, Villa Borghese, and the ancient harbor of Rome at Ostia Antica. Returning to Urbino, we resumed our linguistic trek through time with a look at the influence that Latin and the Romance languages had on medieval and Renaissance English, taking a close look at the Latin and Italian elements in Romeo and Juliet and reading excerpts from the play in Italian. We then had the opportunity to travel to the heart of the Italian Renaissance, Florence, to climb to the top of Brunelleschi’s magnificent dome, to examine medieval and Renaissance medical texts at the Medici’s Laurentian Library, and to marvel at Michelangelo’s David and the glorious paintings and sculptures collected in the Uffizi. We also loved our day in Siena, strolling the tiny medieval streets and soaking up the sun in the Campo. Our semester came to an end with a presentation of student projects, followed by a beautiful drive through Le Marche, to share a final dinner at an old farmhouse nestled in the hills near a vineyard.

Even though I spent only four weeks with the students, I feel that this was one of the most enriching and valuable educational experiences of my entire academic career. I think I speak for the other two instructors, Dr. Andrea and Dr. Molly Zaldivar, as well as the students, when I say that this was a semester beyond compare. We knew, as we ambled together up the ancient cobblestone streets toward the Ducal Palace, or down the colonnade to a dance performance, or simply sat together in the main piazza sipping cappuccino and chatting with other students and faculty, that we had been given a gift—the chance to live life alla italiana, to learn about another culture by immersing ourselves in it, to perfect our Italian language skills at every opportunity, to experience the Renaissance from the inside.

With Dr. Marita Nummikoski, I am co-organizer of the ongoing COLFA Semester in Urbino Program. We are already well underway with plans for next spring’s 13-week program, which will include classes in history, communication, art history, and Italian language, at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The program fee is a very modest $7000, which provides students with a private dorm room at the University of Urbino, ten meals a week plus breakfast, and most expenses for the field trips. In Spring 2013, students will be traveling to Rome, Florence, and Siena, as mentioned above, as well as to Venice, Verona, and Padua. Students receive UTSA credit for all courses; tuition is not included in the program fee, nor is transportation to and from Urbino. The next orientation meetings will take place on September 11 and 12 (choose one) at 5 pm in MB 2.314. Everyone is welcome to attend. If you’d like more information about the program, please check our website at http://colfa.utsa.edu/urbino/, or contact me at bridget.drinka@utsa.edu or at 210-458-5130. If you are interested in supporting this program or providing a scholarship for students, please contact Kendall Purpura, Director of Development, College of Liberal and Fine Arts, at kendall.purpura@utsa.edu, or at 210-458-4404. E ci vediamo ad Urbino!
Unbroken
by Laura Hillenbrand
Reviewed by Carol Coffee Reposa

This biography of World War II hero Louis Zamperini is a non-stop, full-tilt gallop through 473 pages of high adventure, immeasurable suffering, and ultimate transcendence. Hillenbrand’s first historical narrative since the best-selling Seabiscuit: An American Legend, Unbroken blends meticulous research, a sharp eye for detail, and the story-teller’s gift to chart Zamperini’s multiple transformations, each more astounding than the last. First comes the rough-and-tumble prankster, “a one-boy insurgency” not above stealing food, riding rails, and raiding pay telephones. Then he morphs into a rising track star who closes in on the four-minute mile and competes in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Next emerges the Army Air Forces bombardier on a B-24 Liberator which is shot down into the shark-infested Pacific in May of 1943. What follows are 47 searing days in a defective life raft, a record, during which Zamperini and two other survivors battle extremes of hunger, thirst, and exposure while patching leaks and fighting off sharks day and night. His capacity for both suffering and triumph rises to a still higher level when he is captured by the Japanese and interned in various prison camps until the war ends in August, 1945. During the 27 months of his captivity, Zamperini endures forced labor, deliberate starvation, repeated beatings, and methodical humiliation, all of which he counters with “resilient optimism.” One of the greatest strengths of this book is Hillenbrand’s refusal to indulge in geopolitical stereotypes; she carefully cites acts of compassion as well as brutality by the Japanese, humanizing both captives and captors in the process. Nor does she sidestep the anguish of Zamperini’s early postwar years, during which he wrestles with PTSD, alcoholism, and ghastly nightmares, unable to make peace with his demonic memories. In the end, though, he proves not only unbroken but unbreakable, his perennial resilience leading him to establish a victory camp for boys, take up skateboarding in his seventies, and carry the torch in the 1998 Nagano Olympics on a route which takes him by one of the camps where he was once confined. In an era often inclined to cynicism, Unbroken stands as a testament to both the depths the human spirit can plumb and the heights it can scale.

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Poetry & Art Therapy
Poetry and Art Therapy—Their Power Together
Maripat Munley, RN, MPH, ATR-BC

The power of the arts and imagery to evoke both emotional and intellectual responses is the core of the usefulness of art, poetry, music, and dance as therapeutic media. Poetry is often employed with art therapy to enhance the healing process. This column relates one client’s response to the well-known poem, “The Journey,” by Mary Oliver (below). For many survivors of emotional wounds, each new developmental stage, new intimate relationship, the bearing and rearing of children, and even the final stages of life seem to announce a need to self-heal. The wounded (and all are wounded in some way) feel a need to look again at how they relate and how they can find joy alongside their confusing feelings stemming from early emotional or even physical injury.

After months of therapeutically assessing her current situation, identifying her therapeutic goals, and taking action to reach those goals, one woman documented her new stage of healing by selecting meaningful passages from “The Journey” and responding to them by creating her own art. Her imagery crystallized newfound freedom and movement into the world using her authentic voice and determination to save and cherish her life (Image 1).

The use of both poetry and art facilitated this woman’s paradigm shift. The universality of the words in the poem, amplified by her personal art, provided concrete evidence that she could survive as others have. She knew with an inner assurance that she had the personal agency and will to move into the world through life’s storms, stepping over the fallen branches to find and save her authentic, self-aware life. She developed a habit of journaling and documenting her recovery by using poems that spoke to her, followed by art-making that helped her remember the progress she was making and the feelings she experienced along the way.

Using poetry and responding to it with art appeared to be a turning point in the course of therapy. Her earlier art exhibited limited actual energy needed to create her images as well as lack of implied energy, the energy evident in the picture itself. In her drawing of a tree, often a self image for many, there is a poverty of expression. Barren of leaves, the tree appears to proclaim her woundedness and inability to experience the sun’s nurturing. The branches seem too heavy for the tree trunk and give a sense of being weighed down by all that was going on deep inside her psyche. She confirmed this verbally (Image 2).

Architect’s Rendering of the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts in Downtown San Antonio
Scheduled for Opening Fall 2014

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Yet soon after learning to work with poetry and art together, her images took on a distinctly different appearance. She began to create much larger images, sometimes spontaneously at home. The new images had obvious actual and applied energy and expressed a change in her approach to her future, which she confirmed. She created this mixed media image spontaneously, mounted it on her home fence, photographed it herself, and brought it to therapy to explore. Imagine the shift in actual energy required to engage in all of these activities or even the brand new desire to do so. This image, she said, set out her new treatment goals, the direction she wanted her life to take. The new tree image, quite different from the one above, and the tentative new plant symbolize new growth. The rainbow seems to announce hope and a new covenant with life. Even the picture of the woman in her art, which was clipped from a magazine, clearly resembled the actual appearance of this woman. She felt authentic in the midst of this image and said so. Undoubtedly the exercises of responding to meaningful poetry with art were a way inside for this person, the clarity she needed to understand herself (Image 3).

Image 3

This real-life story has stayed with me for years and influenced my work with many, many people. The courage gained through processing written words, image, and the understanding gained from them is remarkable and somehow a gentler, less intrusive approach that simultaneously yields positive personal outcomes. The beauty of arts that heal still astounds me! It feels authentic to the creator of the art, and rarely do they discard their work. Rather, they save it to remind them where they were and where they wanted to go. Today I am more certain than ever that Aristotle was right when he told us, “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.”

The Journey
Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice— though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your ankles. “Mend my life!” each voice cried. But you didn’t stop. You knew what you had to do, though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations—though their melancholy was terrible. It was already late enough, and a wild night, and the road full of fallen branches and stones. But little by little, as you left their voices behind, the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds, and there was a new voice which you slowly recognized as your own, that kept you company as you strode deeper and deeper into the world, determined to do the only thing you could do—determined to save the only life you could save.


Poetry Flash Mob Hits TAMUSA!
Ann V. Bliss, Assistant Professor, TAMUSA

In 2007 The Washington Post enacted a social experiment to see what would happen when people were confronted with unexpected beauty. They asked world-renowned violinist Joshua Bell to play in a D.C. subway station and recorded the event. Almost no one stopped to listen. I ran across this story just a few weeks into the poetry class I was teaching during the Spring 2012 semester at Texas A&M University-San Antonio and showed an abbreviated video of the event to my class. I wanted them to consider how—or if—we ignore beauty when it interrupts our routine and how we can encourage others to enjoy unexpected incidents of beauty. The students immediately picked up on the possibilities, and as a class we decided to hold some public poetry events to share our collective love of poetry with our campus community. We ended up holding two events—a poetry flash mob and an open mic reading—the first of their kind at our growing university.

In order to understand the extraordinary nature of these events, let me describe our campus and our students. We are coming to the close of our first year at our brand new campus located just off South Zarzamora at University Way. Currently our campus consists of one building—a stark contrast to every other university in San Antonio and beyond. Just as our campus is not a typical academic environment, so our students do not fit the
conventional mold of college students. Many of our students are older than the eighteen to twenty-year olds found on many campuses. Most work as well as take classes; many are the first in their family to attend college. While we have many thriving student clubs, our students are commuters, and there are fewer student activities than are often found at other universities. Nevertheless, the reaction from the campus community for both events was overwhelmingly positive—almost cathartic.

We decided to hold our poetry flash mob in the cafeteria during lunchtime on February 14th as a Valentine’s Day gift to the unsuspecting diners in the cafeteria. Because a flash mob depends on the element of surprise, we made no announcements and had no microphones. We planned in advance the order in which we would read and practiced during the class period before the event. The only criteria for poems were that they should be short and appropriate for an audience who had not chosen to attend a poetry reading. We distributed ourselves around the cafeteria, and at 12:30 I stood and read the first poem, “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” by John Ashbery.

As I started reading, something amazing happened. The cafeteria got quiet, and for the most part stayed that way as the students stood in turn and read their chosen poems. While most students picked poems from our anthology, a couple read their own poems. We did not confine our readings to love poems. Students read works by W. H. Auden, Ana Castillo, Emily Dickinson, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Wordsworth, among others. Some students memorized their poems, some read confidently, while others barely looked up from the page. But all those who had agreed to read overcame their trepidation and read their poems. At the end of our reading I thanked our captive audience, and we headed back to the classroom. On the way out, one woman thanked us for making her Valentine’s Day. The following day in the elevator, an older student thanked me for the readings and told me how much it meant to him. The students were thrilled at the response to this first poetry reading. We agreed we should do another event at the end of the semester.

This time, we could not hold the event during class time, and it was clear that the end-of-semester stress had diminished enthusiasm a little. However, we decided to hold an open mic poetry reading in the foyer of our building on the last day of April to celebrate National Poetry Month and encourage as many people as possible to read with us. The event did not have an auspicious start. The space had already been booked by the Psychology Club for a fund raiser, and only two students initially showed up to participate. However, reading poetry in public seems to work magic. We collaborated with the Psychology Club, most of whom ended up reading poems, and invited passers-by to read a poem. The result was an hour of poetry reading that engaged a wide swath of our campus community. Students read, our university librarian read, even our provost read. Students sent text messages to other students to come and read. Students read original works and grabbed our books and looked for favorite poems. One student recited a poem she had memorized long ago. In one particularly moving moment, a woman who was helping with the Domestic Violence Prevention table finally plucked up the courage to read. Although I had been encouraging her to read, she insisted she was too shy. However, not long before the end of the event, she read a poem about domestic violence that had many of the listeners surreptitiously wiping their eyes.

Poetry—particularly poetry read in an unexpected public place—is a powerful force. It can make us laugh; it can make us cry. But perhaps most importantly, it can create a community based on beauty.

Original poems read at the flash mob:

**Soldier Guilt**
*Natalie Crabtree*

Sitting here
I stare at blank walls
I hurt
I cry
I cannot and will not sleep at night
For nightmares will not give up my dreams
I stare at my hands
For I blame them
They are to blame not me
I cover them with gloves
For they deserve no light
But buried like the people they have killed
Do not call them a hero
For what is a hero?
Who takes no pride in what he has done?
But call them for what they are
Which is nothing

**A New Light**
*Belinda Garcia*

My world was all in dark
And you stepped in with light
Ridding me of all my fears
You gave me a new hope
You made my world bright

Your soft touch
Your warm embrace
It never fails
To put a smile to my face

The thought of you
Always on my mind
It won’t fade away
Time after time

A love so different
So unique and so real
I can’t believe you have a way
Of making me feel the way I feel

A feeling so deep
A feeling so new
Who would’ve thought
That it started with you
Youth Poems

The first twelve youth poems in this issue are from students at St. Paul’s Episcopal Montessori School. They were read at “An Afternoon of Poetry” on Feb 26, 2012.

Clouds
Harriet Martin

Your stripes are pretty
You are like white
Flowers in a blue sky
I like you so much
Love me clouds

Down He Goes
Alby Moore

Down he goes
Around the house he goes
Around the block he goes
It’s a roadrunner

Everything
Elijah de la Torre

There are two of me, my soul came out of me. I am dead. I am alive. Who am I?
I have frostbite, but I am warm.
I am in the sky. I am on the ground.
I am not alive. I am not dead.
Not boy, not girl.
I am EVERYTHING.

Max the Turtle
Ruben Olmedo

He went for a walk in the summer.
Red ears, a little shell.
He swims fast.
I don’t know his feet when he walks.
No look on his face.
Everyday when I wake up he digs in the rocks.
His skin is rough and his shell is hard.
I don’t know what he’s thinking when he looks at me.
He’s scared when he sees Chula the cat.

The Last Tree
Roland Pelsor

I am a tree,
I tower above the land.
Nothing happens that I don’t see. But now all is see is gray.
Humans live in this world.
They do not know of the forest I once belonged to.
My ancestors were killed by the gray blade of death and now I say goodbye.
For I am not just a tree, I am the last tree.

Wind of Love
Cora Dennis

Let the wind kiss you
Let the wind soar over your heads like
Silver winds

Cat’s Song
Grace Simonson

Mew, mew, mew … Mew, mew, mew!
Meow, meow? Mew! Mew! Mew!
Translation:
I will hunt, I am wild, wild!
Mouse meat? Yum, Yum, Yum!

The Beauty
Genevieve Donaldson

I am looking right through you to see the inside of your heart … your soul.

As my mind meets yours I see something … I see your beauty, from the outside your inside peeks from your eyes. It’s beautiful.

Your skin is like a flat ocean, your eyelashes are like dolphins fluttering upward. The rest is just too perfect to describe.

When I look in the inside, I notice that you have a waterfall inside. It is flowing and long. You have an old wise tree with a black sparrow. When my heart beats so does yours except yours is beautiful and syncopated. The stars begin to fall.
**Evolution**  
_Lily Hilliard_  

Evolution: this word has so much possibility but not for me. All it contains is constrictions and more constrictions. It feels like fire, how the word can’t seem to go further, yet I rack my mind to find the solution to my problems.

While turning without my family I am being lost in this mind-racking passion. I take to the heart of more than me. So, maybe evolution is not the right word. Maybe soul or heart but I can’t stop thinking of Evolution. Maybe I have a lot to learn about naming myself but I am not one to look at myself in despair. I am one to look out to the future.

Maybe that’s why I like playing like I am telepathic. I am sorry if this does not sound like a poem, but this is a flush of emotions that I can hear from what I am and what I will become, becoming … more, my more.

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**Sour Smile**  
_Emilia Pelsor_  

Sour makes you smile  
Smile makes you sweet  
So eat sour oranges and you’ll stay  
Sweet!  
Let’s eat!

---

**Locksmith**  
_Anastina Toboada_  

Locked  
Knocked  
No one there  
Unlocked  
Let’s go in!

---

**Spring**  
_Morgan Taylor_  

I love Spring  
The Sun gains heat  
And the Morning dew

---

**Diving Contest**  
_Benjamin Anzak_  
_Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary School_  

So hello, air,  
and goodbye, fear.  
I start my graceful falling here.  
I swim, I tease,  
I dive with ease.  
Who cares about the judges’ score?  
Now I’m a swan,  
and swans can soar.

---

**Like a Deer**  
_Ian Dylon Kearney_  
_Keystone School_  

Like a deer  
Running fast  
In the wild  
Away from the tiger  
Encouraging  
Always keeping people  
Away from trouble  
I have colorful eyes  
And messy brown hair  
Like a deer, like a deer.

---

**I Am Woman**  
_Brittani Jackson_  
_Tom C. Clark High School_  

I am a woman standing, looking at you so far yet near. I am a woman with grace. And style that no man can erase. I am a woman whose voice will be heard. Let no one ignore it. I am black as night they say. I am the color of mud they whisper. I am the color of dirty coal they scream.

I am a woman with poetry coursing through me.

I am woman whose voice is not heard through my lips. But what if I open my legs? They all listen then. With a flick of my wrist and a wave of my hand. I have all their attention then. No matter what color my skin. I am the guider of men, the bearer of children; I am the teacher of life and a slave to it. I am woman and here I stand with my voice in my throat and my heart in my hand. Listen to me and you will soon understand.

That I am a woman and here  

I stand.
Arlington

Catherine-Grace Patrick

From *The Collected Poems of Catherine-Grace Patrick*

In this field of stones
where valiant heroes’
blood and bones,
beneath the seeing eye of God,
sanctify this sod….

Where mound on mound
they sleep in dream
of Freedom’s living flame—
as name on name is etched on markers
washed by flowing tears….

Throughout our length of years
we shall *esteem* this hallowed place—
for the harrowing price they paid,
though *not in vain* …

To gain that shimmering prize
for which these warriors
*gave their all*—
They heard their nation’s clarion call;
they struggled to win the peace….

*Homage is paid with these small, poor words, to all those who have honorably served in America’s armed forces, and who paid the ultimate price for the advance of freedom. This tribute to each fallen American hero is offered in deep respect and humble gratitude to the loved ones of those who bravely defended our liberty. Thank you.*

Across the Cottonwood

Ben Nardolilli

I consider the tree and the grasses planted
Around their open windows
And the social life exposed to me on purpose.
The neighbors know this is the best view
That my house can offer and so they park,
Out in the distance, an unavoidable front
With chairs together and bodies in the seats,
Sharing toothpaste commercial smiles
And reading the latest magazine to discuss
The ethical implications of film.
I’m sure wine is involved, but only enough
To make sure the laughter rolls smoothly.
They make a show of finishing each glass
And bottle and putting both of them away,
Balancing them on a marble table
In subtle acrobatics only the still sober can do.
There is nothing in excess but happiness here.

A Silk Light

Mark Hierholzer

A silk light
Taste of last night’s
Garlic on the rose
But still the light
Red in the east.

A mid-winter of tension
A guilt so deeply buried
In my dark and cold earth
That reasons and rationales
Bat back and forth.
A tennis ball named “Excuse.”

Friends in dreams are gladiators
Dreams in friends are spread paper thin
Against the palette of my tired mind
And the guilt gently rises
To the judgment of wrath.

But what became of love?
That silk light so lightly resting
On my beating chest
Reminds me, reminds me
That within the pomegranate
and the geese, within the crusted bread,
The pungent cheese, love resides
Dashing guilt to shame, leaving it
To the blame it has spent a generation
Deserving, and yet still it questions
Like a drunken clown thrown out of the tent
Lying in the circus hay, food for lions.

Back in My Truck

Patricia Bigelow

First time out of the leg cast
I haul myself up into the truck,
turn the key, slide the gearshift to Drive,
excited as a two-year-old on his first train ride,
bump down the gravel road,
slide through a tunnel of trees,
cedar plumes brushing my arm with spice,
into a clearing of fender-high grass,
park beside glistening water tanks.
A grasshopper leads the way to the shed
where I pour a clicking stream of oats
for the donkeys who crowd in close, flicking their tails.

Back inside the truck I head uphill,
where a raven leaves the shelter of trees,
flaps upward through dappled light, a scrim of clouds,
levels out into sheer, unfettered flight.
I Love the Old Lady
Ricky Garni

I love the old lady in the wheelchair
who pretends to come alive when Oliver Sacks
puts the headphones on her and lets her listen
to Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington

How she smiles and taps her feet so
and sings about the old days and first love
the dance halls and the sawdust on the floors
sharing a bottle of pop with a handsome boy
too shy to ask her to dance (I wonder where that boy is)

and then gently closes her eyes
and the headphones go away
and the lights go out

And she waits for a moment and opens one eye
she reaches out and puts the headphones on again
she turns to Sir Mix-A-Lot and licks her lips like so

everybody can’t wait for the end of the world

Lawful Literates Poetry Contest
Three award-winning poems written by San Antonio attorneys
who were judged the winners of the Voices de la Luna Lawful
Literates Poetry contest

First Prize
From the Kitchen Window View of My South
Texas Garden
Darby Riley

The desert willow blooms this year a few lavender bells
dripping with summer rain.
Senisa, the salvias, red yucca,
rock rose, esperanza – even the nopal cactus-
all open in celebration
trembling and abuzz
bright yellow orange pink purple red in bee butterfly
hummingbird communion.
(In middle age I worry about Earth dying
about running out of time.)
The lizard on the willow jumps from brownness to greenness.
Her colors change without a thought as she stalks, utterly intent
on the task at hand.

Second Prize
Oasis in the Sky
Floyd Lamrouex

At the foot of the Rockies are clusters of amethyst—
mountain ranges scattered through the disconsolate desert—
shimmering oases towering into the sky above arid desolation,
promising relief from sand and sun, mesquite and bramble;
holding the allure of peace and sanctuary;
offering blessings of water and shade.

Chiracahua, Dragoon, Huachuca—
mountains where Geronimo and Cochise
evaded Buffalo Soldiers sent to hunt them.

Ascending the heights of an oasis, I marvel at the change:
only hours ago I labored through coruscating heat and pounding
sun.
Now, a fresh breeze cools fevered skin,
and chill spring water soothes a parched mouth.

I crest the highest peak to where cold wind now whips.
From here I see the world: arid desert valley
and other oases on the horizon, royal purple in their grandeur.

Touching heaven atop this pinnacle of the world—
I am pierced by the Creator’s Spirit
as His shekinah glory passes by in the rushing wind.
I stand in awe of Him and this universe He created,
engorging on the vistas and reveling in the majesty of His
creation.

Sadly, I leave; it is a wondrous place to visit,
but one cannot live here.
Forever touched and marked by my Creator,
I descend into the midst of the oasis,
knowing that my heart, my soul, my world are forever changed.

Third Prize
The Request
Jeff Akins

Bury me on a cold rainy day,
in my gray flannel suit
and my camel hair coat.

Wrap my red wool scarf high on my neck.
My silk-lined gloves you should keep.
Wear them for me.

Let the cold wind blow
and imagine me in the distance,
walking in the rain.
**Editors’ Poems**

**Portrait of a Mayan, Oaxaca**

*Carol Coffee Reposa*

Pacheco’s mural shows the *indio*’s feet
Nothing but his feet
His long stride
Raising clouds of dust
That billow through the gallery.

Calloused, seamed and shoeless
They leave their giant canvas
And walk straight through me,
Passing through
Four centuries

Of hunger in the heat,
Weight no one could carry
Thirst never satisfied
Sweat rolling
Into an early grave

But the *indio* outlasts the journey
Continues his long march through deserts,
Sawtoothed mountains
Barricades and rifles
Boiling coasts

Toward a street
Filled with song,
Marimbas and dappled light
At last cold water
In the shade.

**Illness**

*for Deb*

*Mo H Saidi*

He says
I’m nearing the end
for my breaths are shallow
my heartbeats faint

my mind dim.
I’m a lost wanderer
unable to find
the destination.

He says
I’m not afraid of death
for it’s the beginning
of another cycle.

**Marvelous Error**

*Josie Mixon*

It came behind the times
when it was needed most.
A fiery sun has melted away
the sweetness in my heart.
Naked bones of my failure
are a marvelous illusion.
My story played backwards
with images of everything falling apart….
In reality it was finally coming together.

**Granite**

*Beaver Creek in Mason County, Texas*

*Joan Strauch Seifert*

I breathe in this summer day, embrace this hillside creek,
while voices of the past hint of ancient visitors.

Others knew it first, no doubt; the creek runs pure.
Mine now for awhile, it flows across ancient granite.

Travelers surely stopped here, sat on this ledge
to scoop fresh water, relaxed, laughing, maybe.

Their times were harsh, yet was serenity offered here?
This is a restful, learning place.

It won’t vary, this granite pathway, not for me, for anyone.
Water’s course is serious. This channel will remain.

Seasons change, green goes to russet, brown, then green again.
Leaves tumble and renew; that commitment’s always been.

To stray from what was put here to teach constancy? No,
I realize this granite’s lasting path, sustain its rule.

**The Back Side of Stone Mountain (#2)**

*James R. Adair*

Four million people live in this city.
Hundreds are at the park today—
walking, running, climbing, playing, riding, loving—
yet here I sit, on a large boulder,
looking out over an area more than a hectare in size,
and I don’t see another living soul.
And I like it that way.
Don’t get me wrong; I like to be around people,
but there are times when only solitude will do.
The blue sky, the gentle breeze, the bright sun,
verdant trees, waving grass, chirping grasshoppers.
At times I feel like the whole universe was created for my benefit.
This is one of those times.
The Energetic Truth
Alice Zimmerman
in response to the artworks of Annalisa Jose

On this multidimensional journey
Ever entwined in circles of you
I take gentle, passionate, sacred steps
Weaving gossamer strands in my wake

Over and over and over again
Through traveled ages, phases, and time
I walk, at last, through destiny’s door
Recognizing truth in silent roars

That
I am you
You are me
And we are One

Illumination
Alice Zimmerman
in response to Golden Mean, the artwork of Jean Dahlgren

I am a phoenix rising from the pyre
Blazing my way from one life to the next
All of me burns away with a force indescrivable
As a roaring, raging, illuminating rapier incinerates me to my center
Dissolving all that is old and no longer useful

And I rise …
And I raise … my self
Renewed, re-birthed, rediscovered
Only to recognize that all I ever had to do
Was remember
La Sombra de Mi Alma
_Federico García Lorca_

La sombra de mi alma
huye por un ocaso de alfabetos,
niebla de libros
y palabras.

¡La sombra de mi alma!

He llegado a la línea donde cesa
la nostalgia
y la gota de llanto se transforma
alabastro de espíritu.

¡La sombra de mi alma!

El copo del dolor
se acaba,
pero queda la razón y la sustancia
de mi viejo mediodía de labios,
de mi viejo mediodía
de miradas.

Un turbio laberinto
de estrellas ahumadas
enreda mi ilusión
casi marchita.

¡La sombra de mi alma!

Y una alucinación
Me ordeña las miradas.
Veo la palabra amor
desmononada.

¡Ruiseñor mío!
¡Ruiseñor!
¿Aún cantas?

Rima XXXVIII
_Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer_

Los suspiros son aire y van al aire.
Las lágrimas son agua y van al mar.
Dime, mujer: cuando el amor se olvida,
¿sabes tú adónde va?

The Shadow of My Soul
_Federico García Lorca / translated by Gerard S. Robledo_

The shadow of my soul
escapes through a sunset of letters,
a haze of books
and words.

The shadow of my soul!

I have come to the line
where nostalgia ceases
and a tear drop becomes
alabaster essence.

(The shadow of my soul!)

The flakes of pain
dissipate,
what lingers is reason and the remnants
of an old man’s midday lunch upon my lips,
my aged lunch
of glares.

A nebulous labyrinth
of smoking stars
entangles my illusion,
nearly withering it.

The shadow of my soul!

Hallucinations
siphon my eyes,
all I can see is
the word love
collapsing.

My sweet nightingale!
Nightingale!
Are you still singing?

Rhyme XXXVIII
_Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer / Translated by James R. Adair_

Sighs are air and go into the air.
Tears are water and go to the sea.
Tell me, woman: when love is forgotten,
do you know where it goes?
**Bordas de Hielo**  
_Cesar Vallejo_  

Vengo a verte pasar todos los días,  
vaporcito encantado siempre lejos …  
Tus ojos son dos rubios capitanes;  
tu labio es un brevísimos pañuelo  
rojo que ondea en un adiós de sangre!

Vengo a verte pasar; hasta que un día,  
embriagada de tiempo y de crueldad,  
vaporcito encantado siempre lejos,  
la estrella de la tarde partirá!

Las jarcias; vientos que traicionan;  
vientos de mujer que pasó!  
Tus fríos capitanes darán orden;  
y quien habrá partido seré yo ….

---

**¡Torres de Dios! ¡Poetas!**  
_Rubén Dario_  

¡Torres de Dios! ¡Poetas!  
Pararrayos celestes,  
que resistís las duras tempestades,  
como crestas escuetas,  
como picos agrestes,  
rompeolas de las eternidades!

La magica Esperanza anuncia el día  
en que sobre la roca de armonía  
expirara la perfida sirena.  
Esperad, esperemos todavía!

Esperad todavía.  
El bestial elemento se solaza  
en el odio a la sacra poesía,  
y se arroja baldón de raza a raza.  
La insurreccion de abajo  
tiende a los Excelentes.  
El canibal codicia su tasajo  
con roja encia y afilados dientes.

Torres, poned al pabellon sonrisa.  
Poned ante ese mal y ese recelo,  
una soberbia insinuacion de brisa  
y una tranquilidad de mar y cielo….  

---

**Gunwales of Ice**  
_Cesar Vallejo / translated by Gerard S. Robledo_  

I come to see you pass every day,  
your enchanting steam always just out of reach …  
Your eyes are two blond captains;  
your lip is a short red bandanna  
that waves in a farewell of blood!

I come to see you pass; until one day,  
heady with time and cruelty,  
your charming steam just in the distance,  
the evening star will depart!

The rigging; betrayed by winds;  
winds of fleeting women!  
Your frigid captains will give orders;  
and the one who will be departing shall be I ….  

---

**Towers of God! Poets!**  
_Rubén Dario / translated by Gerard S. Robledo_  

Poets, towers of God,  
divine lighting rods,  
which withstand harsh tempests,  
concise as crests,  
and rugged as peaks,  
barriers to the oceans of eternity!

The mythical Hope will declare the day  
on which the deceitful siren  
will die upon the rock of harmony.  
Waiting. Still, we wait!

Waiting, nevertheless,  
the bestial component takes solace  
in hatred for sacred poetry,  
scattering degradation to all peoples.  
Rebellion will come to the exceptional  
from below, unseen.  
Still waiting, the cannibal lusts for flesh  
with bloody gums and honed teeth.

Poets, set a smile on the edifice.  
Bring before that evil and mistrust  
The imposing breeze  
and tranquility of the sea and sky….  

---

Voices de la Luna, 15 July 2012
Select Poems

There Is Yet Free Flight
Margie McCleless Roe

Among the signs of limits
three things said to me,
There is yet free flight.

First, the sleek young woman
whose clean sedan wore chrome
like jewelry and passed my car,
breaking away from the morning mass.

Next, the man in the open boxcar,
framed by the door,
racing me west for a while,
his broad smile playing across the wind.

And a low-flying bird
ahead of me, guiding my car
down the street like make-believe radar.

Three signs saying—
There is yet free flight.
There are passages.

Snow Day
Anne Whitehouse

The snow fell thickly
blanketing the quiet woods,
collecting in the crevasses of trees,
filling up the valleys,
turning a cold, white face to the sky.

I felt like a child again
not in my own childhood
but my daughter’s.
She had tramped through deep snow,
sledded down slippery hills
speechless with the shock of speed,
and tumbled out in fear and joy,
snow against her skin
setting her cheeks on fire.

A wild elation filled me,
like mercury climbing in the old thermometers,
inexorably rising
like the beginnings of spring underground,
the sleeping bulbs,
hundreds that we planted last fall,
biding under earth and snow,
preparing the germ of life.

The Dawn of a Nation
Karla Morton

"I have often looked at that behind the president without being able to
tell whether it was rising or setting. But now I ... know that it is a rising ...
sun."—Ben Franklin (after signing the US Constitution) commenting
on the sun painting on George Washington’s chair

It’s said, in that moment, he wept –
wept for this wild land
carved by backbone and hatchet;

for a people bursting for freedom
like ripe Indian corn -- independence,
rasped like flint upon their lips --

We the People;
We the People…
For three months they met,

hands striking and re-striking desks;
voices raised; delegates in full regalia
of stockings and weskits and wigs;

all gathered around the fire of inspired minds,
the swirl of feather; the scoot of chair; then it is done;
the sun always, always on the rise.

A Strange Peace
Karla Morton

In a million years we’ll ooze from vaults
and metal caskets, back in the mud where we belong.
—Walt McDonald, “Praying for Rain on the Plains”

Ship ribs stood from the mud,
unearthed in tragedy
20 feet beneath Manhattan streets,
sunk when America was just a babe;
remnants of Caribbean marine life
bored into her wood;

200 years of building, of progress;
of fire and murder and heartbreak;
yet it held strong in all the chaos,
hull intact;
a new compass point of our lives—
ground zero for the strength of a people;

a strange peace that all is well,
that hope was always there,
buried deep in the dark of the mud.

Karla Morton is the 2010 Texas Poet Laureate.
**Living on the Corner of Rettig Lane:**
*Cincinnati, Ohio*
*Cyra S. Dumitru*

Tall pines lined the lane when we were children. David chased our labrador through and around them, weaving the symbol for infinity. One Saturday I returned home from a slumber party to find the dog gone, given to a Kentucky farmer. No more would Jason chase motorcycles nor chew Daddy’s woolen coats.

The pines began to brown when we were in high school. At night I climbed out my bedroom window near the lane, slipped through the ragged branches to Michael waiting in his Mustang. We’d drive Interstate 75 with the top down, end up naked in the sand traps of Camargo Country Club. That summer of forever, the one that followed David’s death—charred boxwoods remained along the front walkway. No one uprooted them. We closed the heavy brocade drapes in the living room. Came and went through the back door. Twenty years later, the pines are a clearing of stumps and nowhere is David’s name carved in stone.

**The Straits of Florida**
*Larry D. Thomas*

The boat is splintered wood, primitive, loaded well beyond its capacity. The men, women, and children, bunched within its nondescript interiors, watch the fading lights of Havana, and they pray. Oblivious of the treacherous currents hellbent on tearing the boat asunder, they oar, concentrating their thoughts instead on the multitude of loved ones they will never gaze upon again; on the hazy, glimmering rectangles they’ve heard will slowly rise from the horizon to the north. The teeth of the swarming sharks beneath them are strangely innocuous, compared to those of the vicious henchmen ruling their beloved Cuba. They just press on, risking everything for a shot at a new life free of the deep bruises hammered into their flesh by a despot, marring with blues, yellows, and blacks the sacrosanct pinkiness of their souls.

**Guitar**
*Geoffrey Anderson*

A mane of cobwebs wrapping a head of pegs,
your hollow body abandoned by spiders and vibrations that called you home, only to starve beneath your ribs,
you sit with the patience of a river in a torn canyon.

Does the stairwell remember your songs,
how they would course up and down the banister like an usher in a hall,
trebles floating to the mirror watching themselves as basses slogged around the lower shelves of the bookcase?
Would walls inch closer the moment a string stirred from sleep or floorboards beg to carry your bag?
Or has everyone forgotten your voice, as some forget faces after years of distance;
did you notice my surprise when I found you here, put your neck in my arms, and heard a note as it tumbled down your throat?

**The New Name**
*Kushal Poddar*

A new name takes many years before you time your answers right, initiate a conversation with the local fishmonger.

Come the dusks you stroll with your son, even let him wonder alone, befriend the unknown.

Begin to keep knives open, talk with the men. Your mother has the saddest smile, you hear your son’s friend say and wonder who told him so.
Fourth of July
Mobi Warren

a veil of ashes
aphids linger
on the hibiscus
called “fireworks”

Unconscience
Eric Lee

a flower’s jeweled face invites you to linger in a perfumed moment…
you reach for your cell phone
sun shines through an amber mist, a glorious halo…
you fiddle with your car keys
cathedral at dawn… the ancient stones sing your angel’s name…
you wonder what’s on TV
her lips part, eyes open wide – the room fills with a swirling, roseate music…
you worry that you’re overdrawn
the monk sets down the gas can, rearranges his soaking robes…
you reach for the remote
the morning yawns – as the dream arises clear, luminous in truth…
you rearrange your blankets
a child’s imploring eyes show you the sweetness of mercy…
you check your email
six thousand pounds of bone, sinew, plastic – crash together over a leather ball…
you take another sip of your beer
night sky… the immortal stars enfold you in a silent grandeur…
you hum an idle scrap of melody
the Gestapo arrive in their hatewagon, drag your bleeding neighbor away…
you draw your curtains

Stranger in Reality
Sophia DiGonis

None other could read my mind
Or color my thoughts the way
This mysterious stranger whom I find before me does

I can talk to him for hours
About the small things
That matter the most in the world

This is not some stranger in a dream
But a stranger whom I see in the twilight
When I sit having coffee while the stars shine
And glimmer upon his face

He is a stranger in reality—
My reality which at times
I find difficult to fathom

He opens my eyes to the wonders
Of my world and the reality that surrounds me
Only to awaken a desire to make progress
And change my surroundings
For the better

Again, he is no stranger in a dream
But merely a man in reality
Who defines my existence?
In variations of the same thing—

Purpose
To love, to be
To live to create

No stranger in a dream,
And stranger no more
To reality, my reality—

Only this plasma of the Universe here
Gives me roots for foundation
And wings to fly in this thing we call Existence …

Joy
Jim Fuess, Abstract Painting, 24 x 18
www.jimfuessart.com
The Spawn  
Kevin Heaton

Streams speak breeze and polish stones.
Stolid rainbows tread patiently, disguised
as light prisms suspended in lucent
snag-straddle swirls, re-tracing ageless
prearrangements between covert accomplices.
The day star signs sidewinder ripple flares,
signaling “all clear” to the gods of downspout
rhythms—relinquishing stippled darters
downstream, under water nymph escort,
and armed aspen security.

Invitation  
Joan McNerney

Would you like to unwind
an afternoon at the lake?

Solar sparks spilling over us
in showers of golden sizzle.

Put on short shorts, skimpy tops,
stick our toes into oozy mud.

Breezes will shake treetops
while we listen to birdsongs.

Why not float on new grass
facing an Alice blue sky?

Read celestial comic strips
from mounds of clouds.

We can count sunbeams,
chase yellow butterflies.

Devour bowls of cherries
painting our lips crimson.

This noontime is perfumed
with billions of wild flowers.

Let’s go away all day … be
embraced by the goddess.

Bitter Song  
Elisa Nodine

I sing a bitter song tonight
one of poisoned flowers
of Father Time holding his watch
and counting down the hours.

I sing a bitter song tonight
because I have no home.
I sing my bitter song tonight
because I am alone.

I sing a bitter song tonight
because I have no choice.
All that’s left of me, it seems,
is this old bitter voice.

I sing my bitter song tonight
when no one is around.
I sing my bitter song all night
and do not make a sound.

A Meeting on a Bridge  
J. Srygley-Moore

Breezes fade with morning’s tree
a hope that withstands generations.
It was there: not in a bistro,
not in a star-crowned gazebo, but a bridge
laden with cornices and scrolls
indicative of eighteenth-century architecture

It was there he met his future bride
staring into her soft sapphires
a gentle imploring….

It was there she agreed with
a moment’s teardrop
fading to a smile, like the moon
in crescent. It was then
she agreed to share through
trials and triumph … burdens
of future sorrow … freedom
by the Savior of our souls.

Half a century later
they still endure as friends and lovers,
a refrain as father and mother
constant in love eternal
a moment of tears
a smile we hear
… This too from a meeting on a bridge.
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.

Broken
Celeste Delarosa

I’m broken lying here on the floor.
I’m broken as streams of tears
Are running out my pores.
With nothing left for me to say
Why do you treat me this way?
Glitter and glamor won’t take this pain away.
Continuing to ask myself why do I stay?
You just do it anyway.

We always wanted that sweet guy.
But they just keep going by, by, by.
Like a broken porcelain bowl sitting on a shelf.
Can that one guy come and get me and
Be my special help?
I’m not in a dream.
This is real life taking aim at me.
Am I really brokenhearted or just a big mess?

My Firstborn Son
On his 18th Birthday and Graduation
Frances R. Ford

I went and did exactly what I said I’d never do.
Boy, do I feel like a fool.
They say words are powerful;
“Watch what you say.”
Here I sit wishing I could take them words back
for the pain to go away.
So smart yet so dumb but
for the first time I don’t want to be numb.
I sit here and shed my tears,
missing those I wish were near.
Let me feel all these aches and pains.
Break down the wall of constant strain.
It’s getting harder and harder to keep it up
so why not try and just open up.

Everything I’ve ever known I question.
So tired of the constant hesitation.
But after all is said and done,
I know life still goes on.
I’ll try and work things through
but this time not like the old me used to do.
I can’t change what I’m about to miss,
but I can tell you this:
“You are sure one of my greatest gifts.”

Nothing
Earl Salazar

I do not have health.
I do not have wisdom.
I do not have hope.
I lost my faith over 35 years ago.
And it would seem that everything good
That comes into my life, one way or another,
Sooner or later gets taken away from me.
So how can I have faith.
When I have nothing.
When I am nothing.

Days of Excitement
Bonnie Drusky

Those days of excitement are back again!
The wheels of fortune, be they good, are also challenging
and have now been placed on the soles of your feet.

Sitting alone in a daze
wondering what journey you could have gone on
is in the past.
The emotional fiery spirit within is free to soar and grow.
No one can bring a stop to the flames
rising above life’s misfortune.

You can no longer ignore the muddy joyous face
of who you truly are within.

Take a stroll on the road of life with those desperate notes
and send them out to the seas,
so others may read and realize they are not alone.

Smile at the photographs filled with
fictitious statuette smiles.

Recreate the image of who you are within.
You are the artist and life is your canvas.

The two preceding poems were written in connection with poetry therapy sessions conducted by Maripat Munley at the Bexar County Detention Center.
Chicago NAPT Conference 2012

James Brandenburg, Senior Editor of *Voices de la Luna* and Diversity Chair Person for the National Association for Poetry Therapy, attended the annual NAPT Conference, held in Chicago at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center from April 26 to April 29, 2012. In addition to meeting with the NAPT Board all Thursday, Brandenburg also gave a presentation on “How Poetry Therapy and Writing Aids Recovery (Owning Structure in AA Frees the Addict).”

The opening ceremony on Thursday evening featured AvantRetro, the Chicago-based performance poetry duo of Charlie Rossiter and Al DeGenova. They used a variety of techniques and performance tools to present original poetry that gets at the essence of what it means to be human. DeGenova’s major instrument is saxophone; he also plays flute. Rossiter plays conga and other hand percussion instruments. They were among the handful of poets selected to perform at the 2005 Chicago Blues Festival. Rossiter also ran the NAPT open mic on Friday evening.

Haki R. Madhubuti, featured poet and renowned Black poet from Chicago, kicked off the conference workshops with readings from his books and comments on his life story. Madhubuti is the founder, publisher, and chairman of the board of Third World Press (1967), co-founder of the Institute of Positive Education/ New Concept School (1969), and co-founder of Betty Shabazz International Charter School (1998) in Chicago. He has published twenty-four books and is one of the most influential Black poets internationally. What makes Madhubuti so powerful and interesting is the fact that he lives what he writes and says. He believes in a healthy lifestyle, emotionally, physically, and mentally, a lifestyle often at odds with the collective. He encouraged us all to look at what the philosopher Krishnamurti said, “When I change myself, I change the world.” Madhubuti makes a difference wherever he goes.

Diane Allerdyce, PhD, former president of NAPT, was the keynote speaker. Allerdyce is co-founder of Toussaint L’Ouverture High School for Arts & Social Justice in Boynton Beach, Florida, and an activist deeply involved in community outreach and education reform. She inspired participants with her accounts of working in Haiti to help the population claim water rights, founding the aforementioned charter school, and integrating poetry into the curriculum for immigrants whose primary language is not English. Allerdyce is a role model for everyone who seeks justice in society and wants to see a practical application for poetry therapy.

One of the highlights of the conference was a presentation by Mary Hynes-Berry and Joy Roulier Sawyer, “Breathing Texts to therapy.” The couple presented a series of poems by Marshall Harth as a tool for engaging both therapists and clients in the challenge of developing the therapeutic alliance. Participants had the opportunity to offer feedback and share self-reflection on the effectiveness of poetry to capture the alliance experience.

Kathleen Adams, LPC, PTR-MM/S, presented “Poem, Plan Power! How to Put Sizzle in Your Poetry Therapy Sessions.” Adams, one of the country’s leading mentor/supervisors for poetry therapy and journaling, highlighted the need for planning poetry therapy sessions. She illustrated the process through several poems and a detailed planning sheet—a must for beginners as well as seasoned poetry therapists and poetry facilitators.

Marshall S. Harth, PhD, and his life partner Diane Harth, MSW, LCSW, BCD, presented a workshop entitled “Both Sides of the Couch: Developing the Therapeutic Alliance Poetically.” The couple presented a series of poems by Marshall Harth as a device for engaging both therapists and clients in the challenge of developing the therapeutic alliance. Participants had the opportunity to offer feedback and share self-reflection on the effectiveness of poetry to capture the alliance experience.

Alma Maria Rolfs, LICSW, PTR, gave a workshop entitled “Trauma y Trabajo: Poetry Therapy Combining Crisis, Culture, and Creativity with Latina Workers.” She shared her experience of dealing with the shock and grief of female Latina workers in a hotel, where the workers were grieving the tragic loss of a co-worker’s husband. She shared a model for grief-work in the workplace and some poems in English and Spanish. Participants were able to write their own poems after discussing the process and the poems.

On Saturday night Evelyn Torton Beck facilitated the closing ceremony entitled “Creative Aging: Riding the Winds of Change through Poetry and Sacred Circle Dance.” Participants were energized by dancing to such songs as Mykonos and Cerena de Luz and listening to poems by Mary Oliver and William Stafford, as well as the works of many other poets.

Cyra Dumitru, poet and professor of language and literature from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, took the participants through a journey of a tragic event in her life and showed how writing poetry had a healing effect on her life. The workshop was intricate, detailed and well-presented.

Rob Merritt, PhD, NAPT Board Member and Conference Planner, presented a workshop entitled “Memory and Hope: Ways to Infuse the Spiritual into Your Writing.” This workshop was especially timely, since therapists have begun to realize the lack of spirituality in our clients, and Merritt provided participants with some tools to address this issue.

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Ebb

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

I know what my heart is like
Since your love died:
It is like a hollow ledge
Holding a little pool
Left there by the tide,
A little tepid pool,
Drying inward from the edge.
Poetry & Dreams

Poetry, Dreams, and Interpretation
James Brandenburg

Bethanien Dream
Swiss Airplane
March 25, 2012

**Dream:** The dream takes place in a labyrinth. I am trying to find Bethanien for the seminar. I have seen pictures of Bethanien and the surrounding area, so I vaguely know what it looks like. I am traveling by train and by bus through various stations. I ask for help to find my way around. There are always people who come to my rescue and help me, mostly middle-aged or older females. In fact, they go out of their way to help me. They all speak German. Somehow I expect that people are going to help me, so I am not nervous. After getting off the last bus, I walk up the side of a mountain and I look for Bethanien in the mountains. There are cows grazing on the hills and snow on the mountain peaks. I arrive at a multi-leveled building that looks like Bethanien. I go inside and speak to a nun. I am in the right place. She takes me to my room. End of dream.

**Day Life:** I left San Antonio at 6:30 a.m., changed planes in Chicago, and spent ten hours inside the Chicago Airport. I always enjoy airports—people watching, reading, relaxing, and sleeping. The only problem was going through security twice—once in San Antonio and a second time in Chicago. Security measures required that I take off my boots and belt and remove all of my small containers of liquids that I had neatly placed in small, clear bags. The process was a hassle, but the plane trip was great. The service and the food were excellent on Swiss Airlines. The plane ride was also smooth. During the flight, I slept five hours straight and had the above dream. I was surprised to have had the dream on the plane. It was the first dream that I can ever remember having in flight.

**Interpretation:** The unconscious seemed to prepare me for my arrival in Switzerland. The labyrinth is an ancient symbol. Spirals and meanders, precursors to the labyrinth, have been found among the cave paintings of prehistoric peoples. The ancient spirals indicate a passage from the visible to the invisible—the invisible dimension of the divine. There were many similarities between the dream and reality once I arrived in Switzerland. The train station is below the airport in Zürich, and I go to the ticket window. I show the man at the ticket window a map of Bethanien and ask him the costs of a round-trip ticket. He says 74 francs. I give him the money, and he writes down the schedule for me. He is very friendly. I have about a half an hour before the train leaves. The trains are quite punctual in Switzerland, down to the minute. I change trains twice. Between one of the changes there are only six minutes, but the train arrives on the minute. I have plenty of time to catch the next train. On the train to Sorben, the female conductor looks at my ticket and tells me she will wait for me when we get off the train to show me where the bus leaves. She obviously goes out of her way to help me. Upon arrival, she waits for me at the head of the train and walks me to the tunnel that leads over to the bus area. I thank the conductor and get on the bus. The bus ride into the mountains is a little over ten minutes. After we arrive at the bus stop that leads up the hill to Bethanien, the bus driver shows me the path up the hill. I walk up the hill and recognize the building from the dream and from pictures. There are no cows grazing on the mountainside, but there is snow on the mountain peaks. I later learn that the farmers keep the cows inside sheds during the winter and the early part of spring. When I enter Bethanien, a nun greets me just as in the dream and shows me to my room after I check in. The nun also offers me coffee and some snacks. Given that the study of Jung has to do with the study of symbols and the symbolic world, I find the similarities between the dream and reality uncanny. My travels have moved me from the visible world to the symbolic world of Jung and placed me in Bethanien, an old monastery used for religious retreats where I will study depth psychology. How appropriate!

James Brandenburg Accepted at Prestigious Training and Research Center for Depth Psychology in Switzerland

After submitting his application, James Brandenburg was invited to attend the Training and Research Center for Depth Psychology (based on the teachings of C. G. Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz) in Bethanien, Switzerland, from March 26 to April 6, 2012. The Center was founded in 1995 with the support of Marie-Louise von Franz, who died in 1998. The Center adheres to the same exams, thesis, and research papers that are required at the Jung Institute in Zürich, Switzerland. The training analysts accepted into the program are invited to attend two two-week seminars (called block courses) per year at the Center. A minimum of eight block courses is required.

After Jung founded the Jung Institute in Zürich, he was disappointed at the academic nature of the program. He wanted more of the training and research to be completed at settings outside academia. He also wanted to have participants from different professions and different walks of life, not only therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Jung died in 1961, and von Franz became the chief proponent of his ideas. Finally in 1995, she and a group of current board members of the Center founded the Training and Research Center for Depth Psychology in Bethanien, Switzerland. After going through a series of interviews during the block course, Mr. Brandenburg was invited into the program as a training analyst.
Shamans
Tom Keene

Driven by dark dreams, they plumb the sacred pole down earth’s axis hunting vast deeps for tales untold.

They wrestle our angels and demons discover truths we hide, sift the lies we harbor, fathom the secrets we keep from ourselves, name the names we dare not say.

We await their homecomings to rouse us with their deeds that we sweat out our fears, shed our masks, midwife our courage, buoy our hopes, become a people again with stories our own.

No Winner of Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2012
Adapted from
Maureen Corrigan: www.washingtonpost.com/pulitzers.html
Lynn Neary: www.npr.org/why-no-pulitzer-award

Although it was a great year for literary fiction, no winner for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction was awarded in 2012. The Pulitzer fiction award jurors read hundreds of novels, short-listing three:
1. David Foster Wallace’s The Pale King
2. Karen Russell’s Swamplandia!
3. Denis Johnson’s Train Dreams

For the first time since 1977, by failing to come to a majority decision and award the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, the board suggested that none of these three books was worthy of the prize.

The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction is one of the most prestigious awards in American literature. Previous fiction winners have included Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Jennifer Egan, and Philip Roth. Publishers submit works according to published guidelines; winners for the literary categories must be U.S. citizens, except for the history category, in which the subject of the book must be U.S. history.

Susan Larson, chair of the jury, told The Huffington Post by email that the jury members were all shocked, disappointed, and angry at the news. They thought highly of the three books and they took their responsibilities very seriously; their decision to recommend the three finalists was unanimous. According to The Pulitzer Prize Archive, in 1977 the board vetoed the jury’s decision to give the prize to A River Runs through It, saying that none of the short list books were prizeworthy. In 1984 the board overruled the jury and gave the prize to a different book.

Art in the City
Blue Star Contemporary Art Center
http://www.bluestarart.org

Developed from a grassroots event in July of 1986, Blue Star Contemporary Art Center is the first and longest-running venue for contemporary art in San Antonio. The establishment of Blue Star as an exhibition space arose from the need to provide a platform for the work and ideas of local contemporary artists. In the years since its inception, Blue Star has grown with the community, instigating positive change in both the art community and the community at large. The development of Blue Star’s exhibitions and educational programming has resulted in the social and economic revitalization of the surrounding King William and South Town neighborhoods, and the event that started it all in the summer of 1986 has developed into Contemporary Art Month, an event that now includes over fifty collaborating organizations, cultural centers, museums, and alternative spaces.

Exhibition of San Antonio Painters

Blue Star Contemporary Art Center is pleased to present San Antonio Painters, an exhibition juried and curated by Barbara MacAdam, Deputy Editor of ARTnews magazine. This highly anticipated exhibition opened with a reception at Blue Star on 31 May and runs until 18 August 2012.

After the artist studio visits, MacAdam made the final selections for San Antonio Painters, which now features the following eight artists: Andrew Anderson, Roberta Buckles, Marcus Garza, Carmen Cartiness Johnson, Elizabeth McDonald, Sammy Velasquez, Sandy Whitby, and Rachel Ziegler.

During the reception, works by these artists received many encouraging comments. Carmen Cartiness Johnson describes herself as self-taught painter. Elizabeth McDonald has been a finalist for Texas’ prestigious Hunting Prize; her dreamy impressions of place settings and the aptly named Evil Tea display deft paint handling and virtuosity in palette. Pieces by Roberta Buckles and Sammy Velasquez also drew many visitors.
Baboons Can Learn to Recognize Words

Maybe you think that a “hooked on phonics” approach is the best way to learn to read, but a recent experiment with Guinea baboons suggests that word recognition is based more on simple object-identification skills than on more advanced linguistic skills, according to Jonathan Grainger and his colleagues at Aix-Marseille University in France. Baboons in his study learned to distinguish four-letter English words from four-letter non-words an amazing 75% of the time, even when they hadn’t previously seen the word. To read more, see http://www.nature.com/news/baboons-can-learn-to-recognize-words-1.10432, or read the scientific report in Science 13 April 2012: 245-48.

San Antonio Small Presses
Word Design Studio

www.WordDesignStudio.com

Word Design Studio, founded in 1998, is committed to publishing selected high quality poetry collections, anthologies, and other paperback books, fiction and non-fiction. Word Design Studio is author-friendly and strives for author satisfaction through every step of the process toward the final published product. Editor Valerie Martin Bailey has been in the writing, editing, and publishing field since 1970. An accomplished writer and award-winning poet, she dedicates much of her time to promoting poetry at the local, state, and national level. The latest book from Word Design Studio is Mo H Saidi’s collection of short stories, The Garden of Milk and Wine. The latest three poetry collections produced by the Word Design Studio are Oasis in the Sky, a collection of poems and stories by Michaud L. Lamrouex; From Many Springs, a collection of poems by Joan Strauch Seifert; and WUI: Written Under the Influence of Trinidad Sánchez, a poetic tribute to the late Trinidad Sánchez by Juan Manuel Pérez. For more information, please visit www.worddesignstudio.com.

Enchanted Rock

Enchanted Rock at 16710 Ranch Rd 965, Fredericksburg, Texas, is an enormous pink granite pluton rock formation located in the Llano Uplift approximately 15 miles north of Fredericksburg and 15 miles south of Llano. Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, which includes Enchanted Rock and surrounding land, spans the border between Gillespie County and Llano County, south of the Llano River. Enchanted Rock covers approximately 640 acres and rises approximately 425 feet above the surrounding terrain to an elevation of 1,825 feet above sea level. It is the largest such pink granite monadnock in the United States. Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, a part of the Texas State Park system, includes 1,644 acres, which were designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1936.

The Blue Roads of Texas

After adequate winter and spring rainfall, Texas Hill Country roads, especially the farm roads, were surrounded this spring with strips and meadows of wildflowers, most noticeably bluebonnets. The Texas Hill Country begins just north of Austin, continues south to San Antonio, and sweeps west some 200 miles before the land begins to flatten out. To see these magnificent colors, drive up from San Antonio, and follow Highway 16 northwest to Bandera, which considers itself the hell-raising “Cowboy Capital of the World.” Here you can order a chicken-fried steak bigger than your “haid” and dance to live country music at Blue’s Silver Dollar saloon alongside the usual beat-up pickup trucks. Then drive east toward Fredericksburg road and stop by numerous vineyards to taste award-winning wines at Becker winery and other places.
Susan Myers blew out the candles for her fourteenth birthday party and received an uproarious cheer from everyone in attendance. Hundreds of Susan’s friends, family, and acquaintances had arrived for her special day, at her parents’ riverside mansion. The applause subsided. Several balloons escaped from the hands of smaller children. The blue, yellow, and red balloons glided silently upward and began their journey across the blue October sky. This year, Susan’s parents had decided to hold the party outside, in the backyard surrounded by the wooded ten acres they jokingly called their country estate.

For the last three years, the Myers family had resided just a mile outside the city limits, in their turn-of-the-century Victorian home. Susan’s parents were both teachers who lived modest but rewarding lives educating the young people of their community. Both had formed strong relationships with the surrounding townsfolk, and the athletic Susan was especially well-liked.

Aaron Myers was a stocky, bearded man in his mid forties. He always wore glasses and a friendly expression with everyone he met. After receiving his PhD in chemistry, Aaron had decided to try teaching, and he found his calling as a high school educator.

Susan’s mother Joan Myers was a beautiful woman with a petite frame and graceful manner. She had soft, curly blonde hair, a melodic laugh, and a “fighter’s spirit,” her father jokingly said. Joan cut through the birthday cake, slicing off a sizable wedge for her daughter.

After the cake was cut, frizzy-haired Aunt June immediately seized the opportunity to lunge out of the group of bustling partygoers and make her presence known. Despite her large frame the woman was able to dart across the yard with surprising speed. Aunt June, who was by now a little tipsy, managed to spill her martini on Susan’s new shoes. To make matters worse, she began rummaging through the pile to admire her new iPod, softball bat, and a variety of colorful clothes given to her by her parents’ friends.

Aunt June returned forty minutes later. The drunken woman clumsily walked down the face of the hill leading up to Susan’s parents’ house. Susan suddenly remembered that she had promised her father to apologize to her aunt. She smoothed out the creases in her orange dress and nervously walked up the hill to meet her aunt halfway. As Susan approached Aunt June she noticed that something was not quite natural about the way her usually animated aunt was walking. Susan perceived that Aunt June’s movements were stiff and somewhat jerky as she slowly hobbled her way down the hill.

As Susan drew nearer she could also hear a heavy gasping moan hiss from her Aunt’s gaping mouth. Her Aunt’s frizzy hair obscured most of her face, hiding the shredded lower part. Her exposed bloody jawbone was shattered, along with her most of her broken and grinding teeth.

“Hey Aunt June … I just really wanted to say,” started Susan. Aunt June opened her wide fat arms to embrace Susan.

The small blonde girl instinctively recoiled from her aunt’s violent lunging movement, causing the fat woman to crash forcefully into the ground.

“Someone’s had a bit too much to drink,” joked someone from the crowd.

Laughter spread through the partygoers like an infectious disease. Joan saw the whole event take place from a distance and decided to neutralize the conflict before the situation had time to get out of hand. Joan squeezed Aaron’s hand affectionately before crossing the full length of the yard with an assertive jog.

“Susan, why are you being so rude to Aunt June today?” yelled an infuriated Joan. She leaned over to help her drunken sister to her feet.

Aaron Myers let out a shrill scream of terror from across the yard. He was shouting something and began to run frantically toward the trio. An implacable fear suddenly flooded over Susan and a chill ran down her spine.

“Mom, there is something terribly wrong with Aunt June … don’t,” stammered Susan.

Joan balled up her fist and smashed it into her sister’s face three times before Aunt June relented. Susan’s scream pierced the solitude, even as more terrifying roars emanated from the estate on top of her hill. Many of the partygoers began to scatter like deer across the estate, others were frozen in fear, and a few fled by swimming into the river. Aaron rushed over to the two struggling
women, throwing the full momentum of his body into Aunt June. Aunt June crashed away from Joan and smashed her head on the ground, rebounding like a rubber doll. Aaron scrambled to his feet, holding a handful of his dark hair as he witnessed the gory scene.

Aaron clutched at his dying wife and cried out in bewilderment. Susan stared numbly as cold, stark fear began to permeate her body. She had seen this in the news. It had happened in Iraq and in Great Britain.

“It isn’t supposed to cross the ocean,” whispered Susan under her breath. “The president said . . . it wouldn’t cross the ocean.”

Aaron stared into Joan’s fluttering eyes as her twitching hand suddenly went limp. He clutched Joan’s bloodied body to himself and cried again in anguish. Aaron pressed his face against Joan’s mutilated cheek as tears streamed down his suddenly older and more deeply-lined face. His glasses fell to the ground stained with flecks of blood.

A sudden rasping moan passed from his dead wife’s lips. Aaron was shocked as her body convulsed and began to shudder with new life. The grieving husband desperately clutched at Joan’s still warm hands with renewed hope. An inhuman, guttural murmur caused Aaron to suddenly pull away from his spouse. He stared into his wife’s pale hungry white eyes.

It Never Rains in San Antonio
Shannon Schuren

“It never rains in San Antonio.” So says the flight attendant with a smile that matches the sky as we step off the plane, along with the hostess who seats us on the outdoor patio despite our protests about the dark clouds overhead, and the concierge who laughs off our request for an umbrella.

We repeat the mantra as we huddle beneath the thatched hut of the pagoda perched high above the tea gardens, stunned that the rain would dare dampen our spirits or our vacation, as the stranger beside us screams, “No measurable rainfall since February!” with enough power to halt Mother Nature herself.

We’ve heard that phrase before, too, from the grim-faced meteorologist on the television set in our hotel room this morning as we sipped weak coffee and chewed on stale complimentary bagels.

Perhaps, we murmur, people should be grateful for what they have.
We’ve been enjoying the arid climate, a welcome change from the flooded banks of our hometown. It’s the heat that bothers us. More than a few hours outside and we feel withered and drained.

And the hot sun beats down on us once again.

Holding Their Tongue
Yvonne Dutcher

Two men live in a small, remote pueblo in Mexico. They are no longer young, though they will likely live a while longer. Their homes lie just over a quarter-mile apart. They are the last two speakers of Nuumte Oote, but they have nothing to say to each other. They each claim to speak true voice—the name their people gave their ancient tongue—but different dialects. Each believes the other’s dialect is wrong. There’s more to why they won’t speak, of course, but neither can remember exactly how the feud started. Pueblo life has its complications.

One man has no family, and he doesn’t have much to say to anyone. The other has children who moved away to look for work along with everyone else. He speaks true voice to them on the phone. The children understand, but their knowledge is limited to only a few words of Nuumte Oote. The pueblo is almost silent, almost empty now.

True voice is dying. Strangers—ethnographers and anthropologists they’re called—come to visit, to preserve the language, they say. These strangers ask their questions, write down words and
Enough  
Amanda England

Lucy Jefferson sat in her darkened kitchen and watched as the green digits of the clock on the electric stove ticked over to 2 am. The hum of the refrigerator, the gentle glow of the various appliances, the misty light drifting through the lacy curtains she’d picked out so carefully when they moved here eight years ago, all blended with the cooling mug of tea she cupped in her hands to create an illusion of peace and continuity. This kitchen had seen its share of late night vigils; she’d sat quietly like this many times before, thoughts drifting. Twice in the past six years, she’d waited in the darkened kitchen walking circles around the worn wooden table, waiting to call up to Robb and tell him it was finally time, to grab the bags packed by the door, and the second time, to grab the baby from his crib. Three years ago, when her second was just learning to toddle around, she’d paced the same circle through the kitchen with her little baby’s hacking cough jarring her with every step. She had sat here in tears two years ago, silently digesting the news of her mother’s death. Through it all, the same sounds and smells surrounded her. The life she’d built stood—painstakingly perfect—as a testament to effort.

The kitchen was clean, the floors well-swept. The countertops gleamed, and the worn wooden table was well-oiled and soft as satin to the touch. The curtains were pristine white lace. The refrigerator was covered with drawings, simple scribbles and more involved pictures, and the top right was dominated by a large monthly calendar, each day filled with notes in a steady, precise hand. Lucy studied it; the fine print was unreadable from across the kitchen, but she knew what each neatly labeled day had in store. The days strode forward, each filled with its own variation on the same theme: her life, lined out in black and blue ink. Such a well-constructed life; no one would ever think it could come thundering down so easily. Of course, they didn’t see the day-to-day wobbles, the juggling it took to keep the household afloat. They didn’t understand how precariously the gingerbread house was held together, that even one more gumdrop perched atop the brittle roof might topple the whole thing.

And so, she sat, letting the breathing of her home lull her into relaxation, letting her thoughts work over the problem until it was sanded as smooth as a pebble. What could she do?

Robb yelled encouragement at the television when Michelle Bachmann and Ron Paul made their antiquated misogynistic comments; he jested at parties that they’d be caught up with his brother’s three kids by next year, and overtake them the year after. When Lucy joked to a friend at her bachelorette party that old Mrs. Jefferson was saving her inheritance for the son who produced the most children, she was only half-kidding. But old Mrs. Jefferson hadn’t been there through the second pregnancy, the impossible labor. The midnight feedings, exhaustion, and chaos—sure, her mother-in-law had been through the same things with her boys, but Lucy was different. This wasn’t the life she’d imagined for herself, and even now, after years of practice, she still felt like she was a half-step behind the other moms. Mrs. Jefferson, raised from childhood with the sole goal of being a mother, would never be able to understand Lucy’s daydreams of business suits and Powerpoints. Mrs. Jefferson hadn’t been there the day four years ago when Lucy stood while her three-month-old baby screamed accusingly, her immaculate kitchen the decimated front line in an unending battle.

Lucy had strapped her baby, red-faced and shrieking, into her car seat and set it on the counter while running warm tap water in the sink for dishes. The warm water didn’t get the dishes as clean, of course, but it was safer, because of the babies. You never knew when they’d try to scald themselves and blame it on you. Lucy had scrubbed at the pile of dishes left from the previous night’s supper. Robb had glanced at it that morning while he was leaving for work, “Trying to convince me to buy you that dishwasher, hon?” He chuckled as he escaped to work and she was left behind, trying to feed the toddler in his chair while dancing the swoop-twist-curve motion that seemed to be the only thing keeping the baby quiet. She thought about it while scrubbing the crusty plates, pushing harder and harder, forcing the wires of the brillo pad into the cemented remains of chicken and rice and broccoli until finally the plate gave way with a snap, sending a wave of cooling soapy water up into her face, across the counter, lapping at the baby’s toes. The water bloomed red, and as if triggered by the brightness of it, the pain flooded her, a cataclysm of fear and panic and rage and unworthiness, and suddenly Lucy let out a scream so loud the baby beside her closed her mouth and blinked in surprise. The toddler teetered out from under the kitchen table, Tonka truck in hand, and plopped onto the linoleum, his face scrunched up in an accusing scowl.

Yes, Robb and his mother had never experienced the joys of motherhood like she had. Even a few months later, when the pills the doctor prescribed for her started working, she was no longer comfortable with Robb’s jests of only three or four more kids. Now, her youngest, past the dangerous breakable stages, was slowly morphing from colicky baby to happy little girl, and Lucy’s daydreams turned from the business world to playdates, preschool, music lessons, soccer practice. She envisioned family dinners, conversations about the school day, and hand-drawn Mother’s Day cards. No more screaming, no more being drained physically and mentally, no more dark places and secret pills. Lucy stirred, withdrawing from her memories, and reached up above the counter to pull down the blue decorative ceramic vase she’d inherited from her grandmother. She pulled out a paper bag and replaced the vase, then leaned against the counter while she counted the money. It should be enough—it had to be enough.

At the clinic later that week, she thought briefly of Robb, just now arriving at work, and the kids staying with her sister. But as the doctor came in, she thumbed the three-year-old scar on her hand, felt the sharp porcelain edge pressing against her flesh, and remembered the effort it had taken to keep her bleeding hand and the jagged piece of glass under the water, away from the shrieking baby, hidden out of sight and away from harm.
Joey had been weening himself from whiskey and amphetamines with red wine, sipping now and then, fighting off demons. When the wine was done, he would be too. He’d straighten up or end it all. Either way, this was it. As a betting man, he’d say the odds were not good, but if he could just talk to his Maggie—who knew? She might even out his chances.

He coughed violently, spit a thick mucous blob into a Mason jar, compared the phlegm’s darker green to the rest, and set the partially filled jar on the floor beside the tattered sofa. Maggie wouldn’t be at work until 3:00; he could call her at the hospital. He just needed to hang on. He poured his other Mason jar half-full with wine and took a small sip. What was left of the gallon jug had to last. He didn’t want to get drunk, just maintain some semblance of sanity to talk. It had been two years since he’d left. He’d vowed to leave her alone for good, let her go, but Joey was desperate and needed to connect with another human being, the only one he understood him.

For the last few weeks he’d been leaning toward going out on the end of a rope like his uncle who had been found in his basement, bloated and stinking, days after he’d strung himself from the joists. His Uncle John had survived World War II, a prison stint, a lifetime of trouble, but what he apparently couldn’t endure was being alone after Aunt Kathy died. A year after her death, Uncle John had found a new home for their dog. All he had left then was the bottle. Eventually, it wasn’t enough.

Joey had just dumped his dog, Sugar, on his parents, making up some bullshit about going back to school and not having time for her. The truth was, he couldn’t take care of Sugar and she deserved better. He scarcely left the apartment. He’d avoided daylight for weeks, kept all the shades drawn, and only went out after sunset, to go to the check-cashing agency, to the liquor store, or to mail his unemployment claim forms. Even those excursions had been tortuous. He didn’t answer the phone or doorbell.

Another sip of wine almost made him throw up. The detox coming off this load was not going well. Last night, between diarrhea and vomiting, he’d finally curled up on the grimy bathroom linoleum, used a towel for a pillow, and rested there between explosions. Smoking a joint and getting some wine to stay down had finally helped in the morning. A joint now might combat the nausea the way the pot he’d gotten Maggie, the best one time, because the absence was startlingly apparent. That crap through the fog. He understood now that his body was a vessel that could be found at the time, had calmed her stomach when she was doing chemo a few years back. But when he checked the baggie with his mediocre weed now, he was down to seeds and stems.

Joey stood and pulled the shade back a crack to peek outside. A wet drizzle dampened the dingy street. When he switched on the table lamp, it fired like a flashbulb, and then quit. That was the last working bulb except for the one in the bathroom. He wasn’t sure how it had happened but bulbs had gone out and he’d never replaced them, making more and more of the apartment, over time, useless. In the bedroom, for a night-light, he used an old black and white thirteen-inch television set, one his dad had replaced when the one he had was bound to notice it. As long as he got it there by the end of the day tomorrow, he’d be all right. He peeled and then decided to brush his teeth in preparation for talking to Maggie. Nothing came from the flattened toothpaste tube, so he cupped his hands, caught some running water, and rinsed his mouth. Then he splashed cold water on his face and looked in the mirror. A big mistake.

Disheveled hair and an unshaved face didn’t surprise him, but his eyes did. They were bloodshot, which wasn’t particularly alarming—they’d been bloodshot most of his adult life—but now there was such a shocking hollowness that he feared if he stared too deeply into the void, he’d never come back out.

A shard of religious training from his cathexism days cut through the fog. He understood now that his body was a vessel, and this vessel must have carried some essence of a soul at one time, because the absence was startlingly apparent. That crap about eyes being windows to the soul must have been true, and only by his soul’s dying did he even know it had existed in the first place. Locked to the mirror, he realized what happened to his body didn’t matter. His soul was already dead. From the other room Joey could barely make out Bogart’s snarl. “You know what I want to hear. Play it!”

Joey curled up on the couch again, took a sip of wine, and hugged the Mason jar. He and Maggie might not end up back the television, grabbed it with one hand, shut the door behind him, dumped the clutter from the wooden chair that he had been using as a coffee table, and put the television down. When he reached behind the ripped sofa to plug in the television, he found two of Sugar’s tennis balls among the dust and dog hair. He shoved the sofa back against the wall and began to cough, bending over, cupping his balls, feeling as if someone had planted the point of a stiletto boot squarely between his legs. The light from the television screen seeped over the room and he collapsed on the couch. Channel 29 was showing an old black and white movie. Joey recognized the nightclub scene instantly and turned up the volume. It was Rick’s place in Casablanca.

Phlegm shot up from his lungs. He added it to the Mason jar and then sipped his wine. Like an experiment in a school science class, one jar filled, while the other one emptied. Matter and energy may change forms, but are never lost. He settled in to watch the movie, curled in a ball, content, the way he did as a kid when he would lick his wounds on his bed in the dark, watching the fish in his lighted aquarium. For the first time in days, Joey didn’t feel like he was wasting time.


Joey shared Rick’s anguish. He had to talk to Maggie one more time for the same reason Bogart had to talk to Bergman, to make sense of it all. He couldn’t try to get Maggie back either, that wouldn’t be right. Rick would have understood. Joey’s leaving was a noble act, maybe his only one. He sipped more wine. To give up love, the kind of love few men ever experience, for something larger than yourself—well, to do that, you had to suffer. How many men made such a sacrifice? As if his body were betraying the delusion, his throat contracted in a coughing fit. It ended with Joey folded over the side of the couch depositing a brackish mass from deep in his lungs into the Mason jar while his left hand tried unsuccessfully to stabilize his balls.

A commercial for a technical school interrupted the movie, and he carried the unemployment form to the bathroom, annoyed with the advertisement. He couldn’t even hold down his wine, let alone a job. Joey placed the claim form on the toilet tank, figuring he’d be bound to notice it. As long as he got it there by the end of the day tomorrow, he’d be all right. He peed and then decided to straighten up or doorbell.
together. That was more than he could hope for, more than he should hope for, but she could help him. She would understand. He would be honest for once and tell Maggie he needed help. He touched the scrap of paper with her name and number, needing physical contact. When Casablanca was over, he’d call. Maggie should be at the hospital by then. If she was working today. Shit, he hadn’t thought of that. What if it was her day off? “Fuck!” He jumped up and began to pace, felt dizzy from the exertion, and sank back down. No, she had to be there. Christ, just watch the fucking movie. He sipped more wine; he needed to stay calm, but he’d have to be able to talk once he got Maggie on the phone, so he needed to be careful. He filled the pint jar, then carried the jug to the dark kitchen and stuck it in the refrigerator. He would limit himself to the pint before calling.

Pleased with his restraint, he settled back down in front of the television. Watching Casablanca, he could feel the power of his own tragic sacrifice. He’d saved Maggie from having a husband like him. There had to be some consolation in that. It was the stuff of classic movies.

The phone rang, waking his paranoia, and then stopped. If the phone rang again, it would signal the caller was someone he knew and someone he’d talk to. He waited. Just as he conceded it wouldn’t ring again, it did. Maybe it was Albert? Albert might have more pot. He’d have to risk it. Joey picked up the receiver but stayed silent. Finally, a female voice said, “Hello, Joey are you there?” He thought he was hallucinating.

“Maggie?” he said, feeling as if he’d just been touched by God, that his unspoken, even unthought-of prayer had been answered. “You won’t believe this. I’ve been sitting here just waiting to call you. I swear. It’s incredible.”

“Joey, there’s a message here that you called Friday night. It says to call you back ASAP.”

“Oh.” He tried, but couldn’t pull Friday from the abyss. “You don’t even remember, do you?” she said in a clinical fashion. She was at work after all.

There wasn’t much sense in denying it. “No,” he said. “Fuck.” “I see you still use the one ring, hang up, call back signal,” she said.

“Yeah, well you never know, but I’m glad you got me.” “I need to talk with you about anyway.” Her voice had that creep with other important papers.”

“I didn’t want to hurt you. I never—”

“You decided we were through, not me. I was happy. We could have worked anything out. I loved you.”

“Congratulations,” was all he could finally say. He gulped some wine. “I guess this is really it, huh?”

“Nope.”

“They won’t marry us without proof.”

“Joey … it was your decision, not mine.”

“I want you to tell me you have proof we’re divorced. That you have the paperwork.”

“You didn’t want to hurt you. I never—”

“Aren’t you going to call? She says they can’t.”

“I can’t even keep track of my unemployment claim,” he said, his voice cracking. “I don’t know where any fucking thing is.”

“But you did go through with it? We were divorced back in Colorado?”

“Yes,” he said, getting his composure back. “I mean since we were already living together again, I probably just stuck both decrees with other important papers.”

“You don’t know where?”

“Nope.”

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“Joey … it was your decision, not mine.”

“I didn’t want to hurt you. I never—”

“You decided we were through, not me. I was happy. We could have worked anything out. I loved you.”

“Joey, I didn’t want to tell you like this but … I’m supposed to get married next week. I’ve got to prove I’m not still married to you.”

He couldn’t have heard her right. He wanted Maggie to stop so he could comprehend, but she just kept on.

“This is important. You’ve got to be honest with me. Are we divorced?”

Part of Joey wanted to cry out, tell her how bad off he was, that he needed her now more than ever, that leaving her was a mistake, that he still loved her, that she still loved him, he knew it and so did she, that he wasn’t going to last too much longer on his own, and most of all that she had been right, he was going to drink himself to death without her.

“Congratulations,” was all he could finally say. He gulped some wine. “I guess this is really it, huh?”

“You decide we were through, not me. I was happy. We could have worked anything out. I loved you.”

“I loved you too.”

“Don’t tell me that,” she said. “You think that makes it better? You love me, but you leave me knowing how much you’d hurt me?”

“I didn’t want to hurt you. I never—”

“Stop! Don’t tell me that anymore.”

“What do you want me to tell you?”

“I want you to tell me you have proof we’re divorced. That you have the paperwork.”

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Hearing his Maggie say us and not be referring to them sparked an evil and selfish thought. He could confess falsely that the divorce was a hoax, and say she was still married to him. It was a trump card; all he had to do was play it. He glanced at the television screen. Bogart and Bergman were standing on the tarmac the last scene of Casablanca, he could feel the power of his own tragic sacrifice. He’d saved Maggie from having a husband like him. There had to be some consolation in that. It was the stuff of classic movies.

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“Joey, say something.”

“Like what?”

“Do you think you can find the papers?”

He looked around at the chaos that was his life. “Where? I don’t have papers or anything any more.” He picked up the scrap with Maggie’s phone number on it. This and his unemployment claim were the only important papers he had. “I don’t even know where I’d look.”

“You left with a box of important papers. I remember that. Where are they?”

“I’ve moved five fucking times since then,” he said, and then with a twinge of shame. “There’s not much left.”

“Do you think you can find the papers?”

“I need those papers,” she said, as always staying on task. “Call Laramie County Court House,” said Joey. “They have them on record.”

“I did. Do you think I wanted to call you? They say they can’t give out that information over the phone. I have to go in person or have a lawyer send certified letters. It will take too long. I need proof right away.”
Joey pulled himself up a little, using his hands on the leash, hooked a foot through the rung of the chair, and dragged it over and under him. When the noose was slack enough, he pulled it off his head. His neck was ringed with a red collar that he massaged while he reevaluated the situation. The adrenaline charging through his veins after talking to Maggie was now in overdrive from the mishap. He climbed up and quickly looped the leash over the pipe two more times. That would do it. Everything was set. Next time was for real.

He’d take a shower. It was okay that the only clean clothes he had were messy. He’d get looking good, take what money was left, and go raise some holy hell. No shot and beer joint tonight, he’d go somewhere nice. When the money was gone, he’d come home, finish the jug, and come in here where everything was set. He’d watch the ultimate show.

Joey felt sure of himself for the first time in months. He looked at his image in the mirror, and his eyes now looked as if his soul had returned. He almost looked angelic, the leash looped above his head like a halo.

The airplane was taking off, and Bogart’s true love was disappearing into the night. Joey knew this was a crucial moment for him too. He’d been suicidal for weeks, but the pain hadn’t been nearly this bad. What he’d felt before was steady, dull, wear-you-down, pain. What he felt now was intense and brutal, but it was the kind of pain that made a man feel more alive than ever, as if the EMTs had just put the paddles to his heart. Every nerve was on overload. He could barely sit. “Maggie,” he said mustering all this sudden energy. “Maggie.” He went blank.

“What,” she said.

“I really hope things work out for you.” He knew his voice sounded forced, but he spit out the rest anyway. “I want you to be happy.”

“I want you to be happy too, Joey—.”

“You deserve a good life,” he said, interrupting.

“I’ve got to get to work,” said Maggie, softly. “Bye.”

“I only wish the best for you,” he said, knowing he was talking too loud, but still adding, “I’ll always love you.” His voice sounded more like Bogart than himself, but it didn’t matter. Maggie had already hung up.

Joey gulped the rest of the wine in the jar and started toward the kitchen, feeling his way along the hallway in the dark, energy rushing through his veins as if he’d just injected a potent dose of crystal meth. His hand hit Sugar’s old leash hanging from the hook by the door, another divine intervention. He took it to the bathroom, where the ceiling was high and the overhead pipes were exposed, slid the snap end of the leash through the handle and looped it over his head. He wouldn’t do it until the jug was empty, but he wanted a plan in place. He stepped back and looked up. If he tied off on the overhead pipe, right there, he’d be able to watch himself die. It would be perfect.

With the leash still dangling from his neck, Joey retrieved the chair that had been his television stand, realized it was not tall enough, and stacked it with two telephone books. As he climbed atop the stacked books, he oddly remembered as a kid that this was how he had reached hidden items in his mom’s closet. Everything important always seemed just out of reach.

He managed to tie the handle end of the leash to the pipe but then couldn’t tell if his face would line up with the mirror properly when he dropped. How much slack should he leave so when the noose was slack enough, he pulled it off his head. His neck was ringed with a red collar that he massaged while he reevaluated the situation. The adrenaline charging through his veins after talking to Maggie was now in overdrive from the mishap. He climbed up and quickly looped the leash over the pipe two more times. That would do it. Everything was set. Next time was for real.

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Making an educated guess, Joey retied the leash, taking up more slack. He squatted to see how low his face would be after he kicked the chair away and smiled at himself in the mirror. As he did, one of the phone books flew out from under him. The chair came to rest slanted against the toilet and the leash gripped his neck like a choker collar. Joey fought not to slip off the chair completely. His eyes bugged and his face turned red as he watched himself helplessly. He didn’t want the end to be an accident. The chair slid slowly the rest of the way down, and Joey’s head tilted as he began to choke. When the chair was down, he realized his toes were barely touching the linoleum. He could relieve the pressure.

“I’m not working,” he said, not able to stop himself. “If it’ll help, I’ll fly out there and get copies.”

“Yeah well,” she said cynically. “I can’t imagine it would come to that.”

“I’d do it,” he said. “It’s the least I could do. I don’t have the money right now so you’d have to pay for the airfare and all, but I’d do it.”

“Oh Christ, Joey, listen to you,” she said.

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Katie’s father carried her into the restaurant as she pressed her hands behind her ears. Her glands had been aching for days now. Poor Katie had only recently had surgery to have her tonsils out. She and her family had lived in this city for two days, and after the long journey to her new home and not knowing anybody, she was more upset by the pain than she might have been. It was strange to be in a new house with bare walls. Nothing seemed comfortable, least of all the never-ending sharp pain in her ears.

Inside the restaurant it seemed to take forever until their table was ready. Katie’s baby sister was getting fussy. The crying only seemed to make her pain worse. The girl pressed her fingers harder against her ears, willing the agony to lessen. While her mom tended to her little sister, Katie’s dad pulled her into his lap and held her close. He didn’t like to see his little girl in such pain. A woman approached them smiling. “Your table is ready.”

Once everybody was settled around the table in a corner a young man came over. “Hello, my name is Bryan and I’ll be your waiter tonight. Does everyone know what they would like to drink?”

Katie’s mom looked up. “I’ll have sweet tea.”

Her dad said, “Sweet tea.”

Bryan looked at Katie. “What would you like?”

The child dropped her hands and muttered, “Sprite.”

He smiled encouragingly at the unhappy girl. “Great, I’ll be right back.”

Throughout dinner Katie’s pain seemed to get worse and worse. When she couldn’t eat any more, her mother gave her some children’s Tylenol. The pills didn’t work fast enough, Katie threw herself onto the floor and wiggled around crying with her hands pressed against the sides of her face. Her parents didn’t have the heart to ask her to sit up in her chair. Bryan walked over. He had been a camp counselor for two summers and felt he connected with children pretty well. “Uh oh, someone’s not happy.”

Katie’s mom turned to him. “Katie just had her tonsils out a week and a half ago and is still in pain.”

“Oh I’m so sorry, Katie. Would some dessert help?”

Katie clenched her teeth in pain and shook her head no. Her face was streaked with tears. Her dad turned to Bryan. “Thank you, though.”
Bryan smiled, “No problem. I’ll bring your check for when you’re ready.”

He walked away and into the kitchen. At the back he found what he was looking for. The restaurant owned a helium tank for birthday parties.

When he returned with the check he had a big yellow balloon tied to a blue ribbon for Katie. By that time the medicine had started to work, and Katie was sitting on her father’s lap wiping her tears. She looked at the balloon, hardly daring to believe it was for her. Bryan bent down and handed it to her. “Here you are, Katie. I hope you feel better soon.”

She grinned, took the balloon from him, and shyly said, “Thank you.”

She was embarrassed to be seen crying in public, and she was even more afraid that people would think she was throwing a fit. She wasn’t the type of child to throw tantrums, especially in public, and she tried never to cry in front of people. Bryan made a loop on the end of the ribbon and slid it around Katie’s small wrist. After leaving a generous tip for the waiter, the Parkers left the restaurant. Katie couldn’t take her eyes off of her balloon. She made sure to wave to Bryan on the way out. He smiled and called, “Good night, Katie.”

In the car she held the balloon in her lap so her dad could see out the back. Her baby sister took interest in the balloon too. Little Olivia could only sit up and babble. She didn’t do much yet. Katie looked at her. “Olivia, you’re just a baby. You’re too little to have a balloon. But when you get bigger you can play with my balloon and me.”

This should have hinted to the parents of dramas to come, but they just thought it was cute. At home Katie’s mom said, “Bath-time, Katie.”

“What about my balloon?”

“Balloons don’t take baths. Little girls do.”

Katie compromised by letting the balloon float above the toilet while she played in the bathtub. When she got out, she pulled the blue ribbon to her room, hooked the loop around the bulb on her bed, and slept soundly. She was so worn out that she didn’t notice that the crying coming from her parents’ room was not Olivia in her bassinet.

Since Olivia was born, her mother had been very emotional. Little things seemed to bother her, and she slept a lot during the day. The move especially made her happy and sad at the same time. Such a combination made her upset also. She tried to hide it from her daughter, but grownups will never realize just how perceptive small children can be. When Katie asked what was wrong, her mother said that babies are hard work and tiring. Katie was a good big sister. She tried to help with Baby Olivia. She watched her dad warm formula in the bottle and in a few days was an expert at feeding her little sister. She kept Olivia happy and taught her things about her toys and her favorite movies.

And so the next few days passed. Everywhere Katie went her balloon went too. She was extra careful around ceiling fans and looped it around her wrist whenever she went outside. People in stores smiled at the little girl followed by her yellow balloon. A few times Katie let her little sister touch her rubber companion, but she was worried that Olivia wouldn’t be gentle with it. At the jingle of a bell she made sure her balloon was out of reach of Jingles, the cat. When they bought Jingles a couple of years earlier, Katie’s dad had said that the kitten needed a bell on his collar so that he couldn’t ever sneak up on them or get lost either. Katie decided that Jingles was the only name for a small cat that rang as playfully as this one.

As the family got to know their new area, Katie did so in her own way. After a tearful morning Katie was permitted to take her balloon to her new church if she promised to hold it the entire time they sat in big church. In Sunday School children asked about the balloon and Katie happily told her story. It was a simple process, but nobody seemed to realize that the balloon had become a comfort object for Katie. It was a conversation piece and a way to meet new kids. She didn’t need to be shy because she had her balloon to hold tight.

As the days went on, the balloon drooped lower and lower. Finally Katie was reduced to pulling the ribbon as the yellow balloon dragged along the ground. When Katie came to the breakfast table like that her mother said, “Katie, it might be time to throw your balloon away.”

The little girl opened her eyes wide and shouted, “No!”

Her mom patiently tried to explain, “Your balloon doesn’t float anymore, honey. It’s losing its air.”

Katie picked up her dirtyed balloon and held it to her chest, “I don’t want to throw it away! I want to keep it!”

“Ok, that’s all right. Why don’t you sit down and have breakfast?”

Katie suspiciously positioned her yellow companion away from her mother and sat right next to it.

A few days later Katie sat on the couch watching The Swan Princess in the late afternoon. The sun streamed through the window, keeping the child warm and lighting up the balloon. The balloon was much darker since it had shrunk. There was dirt and fuzz all over it, and it was worn thin from having been scraped against the sidewalk every day. She heard Olivia cry in the other room.

Katie dutifully rose from the couch and dragged her balloon with her to check on her sister. Her dad was in the backyard setting up a swing set for the girls, and her mom was napping. Jingles looked up from his resting place and followed the balloon with his eyes. What nobody but the cat knew was that earlier in the afternoon the bell had annoyed Katie’s mom so much that she angrily took his collar off so she could have some peace.

POP! Katie whipped around and saw Jingles scamper in the opposite direction. She let loose a piercing scream that carried throughout the house and a few houses to each side. The noise was one that can only be made by a prepubescent child. Her dad ran inside, and her mom woke and went to find Katie.

They found their small daughter crouched on the carpet holding her popped balloon in her hand. The dirty yellow rubber looked like it too was sad as it drooped over her fingers, clinging to a long, blue ribbon. She had tears in her eyes. She looked up at her parents and cried, “Jingles popped it!”

Her mom was relieved that it was just the balloon. She said, “Oh Katie, we’ll buy you another one.” Then she turned to get Olivia.

Katie turned her moist blue eyes to her dad. “Daddy, I don’t want another one. I want this one.”

The father nodded and picked up his little girl. He walked her and the balloon both to the couch and sat down with Katie on his lap. “Let’s finish watching the movie. Afterward we’ll find a

Voices de la Luna, 15 July 2012

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News & Views

Persian-Israeli Star Sings Iranian Music in Tel Aviv
Adapted from http://online.wsj.com/article/arts

Music-loving Iranians craving nostalgic Persian songs of a bygone era, or the upbeat dance music that is banned in their Islamic state, now have a new darling: Rita, the Israeli singing sensation. Rita Jahanforuz, 50 years old, is Israel’s most famous female singer—and suddenly she’s big in Iran. Iranian-born and fluent in Persian, Rita, as she is universally known, moved to Israel when she was eight and has lived there ever since. Her latest album, All My Joys, revives old-time Persian hits, giving them an upbeat Mediterranean flavor that caters to the Israeli ear.

Rita, however, with her striking beauty and bubbly demeanor, has created an unexpected bond between ordinary Iranians and Israelis—part cultural ambassador, part antiwar spokeswoman. A picture of Rita with the banner, “Iranians we will never bomb your country,” is posted on her Facebook page. Rita believes that her music can “puncture the wall” of tension in that war-torn region.


Persian Marchers: A Novel
Mo H Saidi

Chapter Eleven
After a Long Day of Teaching at the High School

After a long day of teaching at the high school, Maryam had gone to the office of the Iranian Women Teachers Association to complete a report for their monthly newsletter. As secretary of this organization, she had attended the Annual Convention of the Iranian Women’s Association in Raamsar Royal Hotel on the coast of the Caspian Sea the previous week. Her Majesty Queen Farah had opened that convention and given the inaugural speech. On the second day, Maryam had delivered the official report of the Women Teachers Association and conveyed their views about a number of job-related issues and their gratitude for Her Majesty’s support and attention. Speeches and presentations at the convention were strictly non-political and congratulatory, and always supported the status quo.

Maryam stayed till late afternoon writing up the report and revising the next day’s agenda. It was early in the evening when she returned home. The housekeeper had already prepared dinner and the dining table was set. Habib was reading the paper in the family room, sipping his customary vodka and Coke. Maryam brought a large plate of fruit from the kitchen and joined him. Soon they were immersed in a companionable chat about the events of the day. Maryam praised Queen Farah’s interest in women’s rights. “No one in the meeting wore a scarf or veil,” Maryam said. “For the first time it felt good to be a woman in Iran, recognized for our professional activities, not our faces, hair, or curves.”

Cyrus, now well-rested, climbed down the stairs from his room and joined them. He brought the two poetry books with him and set them down on the table.

“How was your day?” Maryam asked Cyrus.

“It was pretty hectic. The smog and the traffic were horrible.”

“You’re not used to that.”

“How did you get your exit permit?”

“The agent said I’ll get it in two days, at the airport right before my departure.”

Habib was surprised. “They usually issue a permit right there in the office; you pay a fee to the cashier and then an official stamps the exit permit. Was there a problem today?”

“There was a question about my trip to Hungary.”

“Didn’t you have the same difficulty during your last visit?”

Habib asked, sounding annoyed. “I thought that had been resolved. This is simply too much. That stupid official should have seen the note in your passport.”

“He did see it and assured me that there wouldn’t be any problem leaving Iran.”

Maryam tried to calm the stormy waters of her husband’s temper. “It’s probably just a new procedure.”

Cyrus was content with the official explanation for his passport arrangements and asked about Habib’s day.

“We had a very important meeting at Central Bank Headquarters. Money is tight and the economy has slowed down sharply but because of the high rate of inflation, the government advised us not to expand the money supply at this time. We plan to approve twenty percent fewer commercial loans. It’s all about controlling runaway inflation.”

“Sounds like you have a double whammy: inflation and recession together.”

“You are reading too much into the situation,” Habib said. “The Shah will overcome the situation. I am certain of that.”

The large plate of fresh fruit, with big purple figs on top of sweet, ripe pears and fragrant apples attracted Cyrus. He bit into a pear and savored its juicy sweet taste. “Fruit tastes so much better when it ripens on the tree,” he said.

Maryam reminded him that the pear was considered the king of fruits in Iran. Habib, impatient with small talk, invited Cyrus to play backgammon. When Cyrus agreed, Habib offered a drink before the game.

“It may help reduce the agony of defeat for you.” He smirked.

Cyrus laughed at his brother-in-law’s banter. “You’re the biggest teaser I have ever seen.”

After Habib set up the backgammon on the coffee table, he went to the bar and prepared two drinks with vodka and coke and brought them to the family room.

“How about you?” Cyrus asked Maryam.

“I don’t drink vodka,” Maryam said, “I’ll take a glass of French Chablis.”

Habib went to the bar again and poured Maryam a glass of wine. Then he and Cyrus started to play the first game of the set of five games. In the last game, Cyrus, who was trailing one to three games, was amused by Habib’s puerile enjoyment of his superior position and his repeated teasing.
“My friend, speaking respectfully, you need to go to backgammon university and take a refresher course.” He grinned, clapped his hands, and waited for Cyrus’s response. “And where would I find such a university?” Cyrus asked, indulging Habib in his antics. “Right here in this house.” They both had a good laugh at that. Maryam was not amused and admonished her husband. “That’s enough! Stop mocking Cyrus.”

Bahram arrived and went upstairs. Maryam disappeared into her bedroom to change. While the men continued playing, the housekeeper brought out a plate of hors d’oeuvres. The phone rang, and after a moment the housekeeper called Maryam. Maryam talked on the phone for a few minutes, and then came back to the family room.

Habib asked her, “Who was calling?” “Shirin wanted to come by and pick up a biochemistry textbook from Bahram, so I invited her to stay for dinner.” Habib was very surprised and said, “How about her father? Did he give Shirin permission to visit Bahram?” She replied, “I don’t know about her father, but her mother permitted Shirin to come. She sends her regards.”

Habib said, “I bet you Shirin’s father is out of town tonight. Otherwise her mother wouldn’t have authorized the visit. You know how much that man hates Bahram.”

Maryam objected, “He only dislikes Bahram’s political views. Anyhow, Shirin is coming for dinner.” Maryam went to Bahram’s room to tell him about their dinner guest.

The large bouquet of roses in the center of the dinner table spread its pleasant aroma through the room. Shirin was sitting between Maryam and Bahram; she was relaxed and felt at home in this house, where the dinner conversation could range from literature to economics and politics. Tonight Maryam talked about the teachers’ demands for a salary increase. “We couldn’t bring it up in our official presentation, but I mentioned it to the Deputy Minister of the Education; who knows whether this will go anywhere.”

“Money is very tight right now. It was premature to ask for a raise.” Habib admonished her.

Bahram and Shirin were discussing details of their biochemistry assignment, and Habib, who was getting annoyed by their private conversation, announced some news he knew would catch everybody’s attention, “Today, two of our bank employees were caught distributing tapes of Ayatollah Khomeini’s sermons.”

Maryam responded with exasperation, “Now they’re going after sermons but apparently they are full of inflammatory rhetoric.”

Habib had the ears of his audience now. “I haven’t heard these sermons but apparently they are full of inflammatory rhetoric.”

Maryam ignored him and responded to Shirin, “I love this one, The Rendezvous. But it’s rather long.”

Habib immediately begged, “Please, don’t read the whole thing.” Maryam nodded. She read:

After dinner, the group went to the living room for the obligatory round of black tea. The plate of fruit was replaced with a plate of Persian pastries. Maryam saw the books of poetry on the table. “Whose are these?” she asked.

“Mine. They’re gifts from Bahram and Shirin. You’re welcome to look at them,” Cyrus said.

Maryam perused the female poet’s book, pausing and rereading a page. Shirin, who was looking over her shoulders at the book, asked, “Do you have a favorite poem? Do read it to us, please!”

Habib, who had never understood the appeal of and didn’t care for Persian sha’er no, frowned and muttered; “Here we go again.”

Maryam ignored him and responded to Shirin, “I love this one, The Rendezvous. But it’s rather long.”

Habib immediately begged, “Please, don’t read the whole thing.” Maryam nodded. She read:

Shirin knew the poem by heart and whispered along with Maryam. “Please recite the rest of it for us, Shirin,” Maryam invited her.

Shirin, who didn’t want to offend Habib, looked at him and sought his reaction. “Okay, but please only the last verse.”

Shirin began reciting the poem; her voice rose and sank with the cadenza of the words so beautifully that even Habib’s face opened up with smile:

Shirin loved the poem, but even more he loved the way Shirin performed it, and he gently squeezed her warm hand. She looked happy and pleased and pressed her shoulder to his. Cyrus thought he could almost see flames of passion radiating from their faces. After dinner, Shirin went home and Habib retired to his bedroom. Cyrus stayed downstairs for tea and a short conversation with Maryam. She was happy with her job, marriage, and social activities. Her position as a secretary and spokesperson for the Women Teachers Association had given her vibrant life apart from her family concerns. With all her reading and research about teachers’ issues, she had become well informed and had gained the respect of her colleagues.

“Do you find there are any limits to expressing the teachers’ demands?” Cyrus asked.

“No one will bother us as long as our demands are non-political and as long as we demonstrate our loyalty to His Majesty.”

Next they talked about their mother’s illness and both Maryam and Cyrus agreed she should travel to Texas for further evaluation and treatment.

After his second cup of tea, Cyrus went upstairs. Bahram was studying but had his door open and saw Cyrus coming. He invited Cyrus to his room, where he quickly cleared his desk of books and notes and offered Cyrus a chair.

Stacking the books on a shelf against the wall, he announced he was done for tonight. Then he asked unexpectedly, “Is it true
that one can easily buy a gun in America? I would love to learn target shooting.”

“Bahram, why do you want to learn how to use a gun and practice shooting?” Cyrus asked. “Are you preparing yourself for an armed campaign against the Shah’s government?”

“Of course,” Bahram said. “The day has come because all peaceful means to achieve a democratic society in Iran have failed. We will indeed need to take up arms against the Shah.”

“Oh man, you really are in serious trouble.”

“I am determined,” Bahram said. “We’ve had enough of The Shah.” And he quoted Hamlet: “to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / or to take arms against a sea of troubles / and by opposing, end them . . .”

“When do you think that will be?”

“Very soon,” he said confidently. “The marchers will be ambushed; the bloody streets will become the battle fields, but in the end people will overcome.”

Bahram was blushing with revolutionary enthusiasm. His determination worried Cyrus. Pointing at a poster of Mirza Kochak Khan on the wall, Bahram explained, “Centuries ago, when that hero was fed up with the Arab puppet government in Northern Iran, he took up arms and liberated that part of our country. Armed struggle has become the only way to end the Shah’s terror. Every day the people are pleading for relief during prayers at the mosque, but no one in Heaven is listening. Taking up arms against terror and injustice is the only way left for us.”

In the killing fields of history
In the war between tyrants and oppressed
God is a neutral observer
Allah is a disinterested party
He is a mere spectator.
God is deaf, Allah is blind.

The depth of Bahram’s revolutionary spirit surprised Cyrus. It was now clear to him that Bahram was committed to an armed struggle.

A short and thoughtful silence settled between the two men. To break the silence, Cyrus came up with a lighter subject, “I like to shoot guns, too, but only for sport.” However, Bahram quickly returned to his favorite line, “I have a better use for them.”

Cyrus stuck to his guns. “Have you ever shot a deer? I usually kill at least two deer a year, sometimes more. Sometimes I shoot a buck and one or two does. Then I skin, clean, quarter them, cut them to pieces, and store the meat in our freezer. We like deer meat. It’s lean. I marinate and then grill the meat for our dinner and sometimes for friends at our parties. We have a shooting range at our leased ranch, and I practice shooting there during hunting season.”

Bahram was fascinated by the topic. “When I come to the US, will you invite me to hunt with you?”

“Will you take you to the shooting range first, to see if you’re ready, then we’ll go for deer, for birds.”

“One day, I’ll own a rifle or even a machine gun and then I’ll hike up the foothills of the Elburz Mountains and practice there,” Bahram said.

“I know it is a capital crime to have a gun here,”

“Yes, but it’s impossible to obtain a gun legally in Iran.”

“I sure hope you will only hunt wild game,” Cyrus said.

“While we’re talking about guns, Bahram, do you know who is responsible for the nightly bombings around town?”

“Why are you interested? You are going home soon and will forget all about this country. You will do your work, read newspapers, travel with your family to distant places, and enjoy your freedom. Why do you want to know these things, why?”

Cyrus was dismayed. “I was born here! And anyhow, I believe in human rights, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness, and I want the same for my native country.”

“Then go back to the U.S.! Here in Iran, we are still without basic human rights,” Bahram dismissed him. “Happiness can wait.”

“The Shah will eventually turn to a relatively democratic system once he has stabilized the country. It will be a challenge, but he will survive.”

“You’re not serious about this. He’s a dictator, and dictators don’t give one iota about the freedom of their citizens,” Bahram said. “Iranians are like camels: they will wait patiently, but they are spiteful and will always avenge past injustices.”

“There must be a way to find closure to this conflict.”

“The Shah has burned his last bridge by ignoring and abusing the Iranian people. He has even insulted their religious faith.”

“I thought you didn’t care about the Ayatollah and the mullahs.”

“The Shah behaves as if we are his slaves and this country is his private property. I don’t care what the mullahs preach, but they are citizens of this country and are entitled to express their opinions!”

“The Shah is a Moslem too and he won’t go overboard against the mullahs.”

“His opponents are the people. The Shah can’t get rid of the people, but the people eventually will get rid of him!”

The Shah loves his throne
God’s shadow, the country is his
the land, the mountains, and the mansions.
But the citizens are utterly displeased.

For the Shah to keep the Taj
he must overcome the opposing forces
either accept people’s will
or transplant new people.

The night was long, and the effect of the earlier tea kept these two discussants sober and talkative. Bahram trusted Cyrus and enjoyed expressing his political views to him. He learned Cyrus had traveled along this exciting but dangerous road before himself.

“Who is responsible for these nightly bombings?” Cyrus asked again.

“Many groups are involved: religious fundamentalists, nationalists, communists, socialist and liberals. But none of them are as strong and as effective as the Fadayan group.”

“Whom do you root for, Bahram?”

“I am for the people’s victory against the Shah’s government.”

“Even if that brings a religious government to Iran?” asked Cyrus.

“That will never happen. The people may welcome Ayatollah Khomeini’s blessing, but they will definitely choose a democratic society.”

“Are there any other leaders as popular as Ayatollah Khomeini?”

“We have a few, but I’m sure a strong secular leader will emerge during the final stage of the revolution.”

“Mind you, if Ayatollah Khomeini is at the helm of the revolution, it will be impossible to push him aside,” Cyrus cautioned.

“Ayatollah Khomeini is a different leader. As I understand it, he belongs to no political party and has no political ambitions. He is supporting the opposition against the Pahlavi dynasty. I am fully convinced he only wants to perform his duties as spiritual leader of the Shiites and settle in the holy city of Qum.”
“Then, by default, he will become a new king,” Cyrus said, “A Moslem Holy Roman Emperor.”

Every night in Tehran, right under the noses of the police, loosely united opposition groups followed their coordinated plans of attack. During the day, the capital was calm, the government ran the country as usual and ignored both the opposition and the people’s unhappiness. But during the night, when the haze of smog mixed with stygian darkness captured the streets of Tehran, the clandestine war began. On the one side, the police guarded government buildings and palaces, and patrolled the streets, while on the opposite side, numerous insurgents, in small groups of three or four, from various opposition organizations, quietly planted bombs in buildings, palaces, and on main streets and squares. Casualties were high. Innocent people died, and a few police too. The damage to government buildings was significant, but no one—especially the residents of Tehran—knew the true extent of casualties or damages. The police knew, and the insurgents knew.

“The Shah’s media act as if none of this is happening!” Bahram said.

He pulled some folded newsletters out of a drawer. “The censored, official press doesn’t print real news; but look at these, you can see plenty of political news here.”

Cyrus took the stack of papers.

“You’re welcome to read them. Go ahead and take your time, but leave them in this room.”

The first one was a newsletter from a Fadayan group. Their front-page editorial called for a coalition of all anti-Shah organizations under a socialist banner, which would also respect Iranian religious beliefs. Cyrus was amused by the editor’s struggle to develop a pragmatic combination of Marxism and fundamentalist Islam.

“It’s a contradictory hypothesis,” Cyrus murmured. “How could you combine an atheistic ideology of Communism with the verses of the Holy Koran?”

However, Bahram either didn’t hear the comment or ignored it as Bahram continued working on his homework assignments.

About an hour later, Cyrus had finished.

“How did you get all these? Surely, one cannot buy them on the street,” Cyrus wondered.

“Shirin brought them tonight in a tote bag.”

“Aren’t you worried the police may discover these papers in your possession?”

“We are not worried about that anymore,” Bahram said. “We read anything that interests us because we want to be involved in politics and the fate of our country. Didn’t I hear that you got into some political scrapes while you studied at Tehran Medical School?”

“Once when I was on the brink of being expelled from medical school, an officer—a high school classmate of Parviz—was in the right place at the right time to be able to rescue my career. After that incident, I’m staying on my toes.”

Hundreds of miles away from Tehran, Mirza Hassan was getting ready to leave Ahwaz and join the political foray in Tehran. The sun had set over Ahwaz Railroad Station by the time the passenger train to Tehran started to move, forty-five minutes behind schedule. Mirza Hassan was sitting in a third-class cabin with seven other passengers. His mind was swirling with joyful anticipation about joining Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters in Tehran; yet the vision of his mother’s tear-stained face and her mournful figure wrapped in the dark veil kept intruding into his thoughts. She had not shared his excitement; she was not only mourning the loss of her only child, but she was deeply concerned about the dangerous situation that was awaiting him, his plans to participate in the bloody demonstrations in Tehran. We have to shape our own destiny, he told himself; he would contact his anxious mother often, write her regularly, and even talk to her by the phone; he felt a deep obligation to stay in touch with her, a widow with no other family member to rely on. The train rattled on, and Mirza looked out at the endless landscape rolling past.

Although Tehran and Ahwaz are only 350 miles apart as the crow flies, the crossing over the Zagros Mountains adds 400 miles of loops and curves to the distance. Built with the technical assistance of Nazi Germany, the Trans-Iranian Railroad required 3000 bridges and 126 tunnels to traverse the country from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. Much of the terrain was unmapped and its geology unknown when construction took place. Several stretches of line, including tunnels, had to be replaced before the line could open. Nevertheless, the line was completed ahead of schedule, just a few months before the start of World War II. Ironically, in 1941 Iran was occupied by Allied forces who used that same line to transfer much-needed heavy weapons from the Persian Gulf across the Russian border at the Caspian Sea to the battlegrounds at Stalingrad. Because of this vital, though somewhat unintended, contribution of Iran to the Allied success, Winston Churchill subsequently called Iran “The Bridge to Victory.”

Mirza stopped musing and looked around the compartment. The young man sitting across from him returned his gaze with a polite smile.

“Are you going all the way to Tehran?” Mirza asked.

It turned out the man was a math teacher on his way to a new assignment in the north. Soon the two men were engaged in a passionate discussion about the unstable political situation. The teacher blamed Ayatollah Khomeini’s followers for setting a movie theater in Abadan ablaze during the midday show. More than 500 people had died in the conflagration. Mirza Hassan, on the other hand, was sure that agents of the Savak, the Shah’s secret police, were responsible and that it was a devious plot to alienate Ayatollah Khomeini from the people. The math teacher was sick of such conspiracy theories and asserted it had to be the work of mullahs, as it was well known that they hated all movie houses.

Mirza Hassan was shocked. “That’s unthinkable. Good Moslems would never burn innocent people to death, not even if they watched anti-Islamic or foreign movies.”

The teacher had the final word, “Not so unthinkable! It is well known that mullahs have already set fire to libraries, then banks. Why not now to movie theaters?”

The conversation stopped when the train officer came and asked for the tickets. The other passengers, a family of four and two old men, were annoyed by the argument, and one of the men suggested the two should continue outside, in the passageway. Their departure from the cabin gave the other six more room to stretch their legs, unpack their bags, and enjoy their picnic dinner. The family had white rice with boiled chicken; the old men, vegetable rice with yogurt.
San Antonio Small Presses

PECAN GROVE PRESS
http://library.stmarytx.edu/pgpress/

Established in 1988, Pecan Grove Press is sponsored by The Louis J. Blume Library of St. Mary’s University. The press publishes books and chapbooks of fine poetry and, very rarely, short works of prose. PGP also publishes a regular chapbook series for students at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. Among the twelve poetry collections published by Pecan Grove Press in 2011 are new books by San Antonio’s Bonnie Lyons (Bedrock), Austin’s Scott Wiggerman (Presence), Austin’s Kurt Heinzelman (The Names They Found There), and Lubbock’s Jacqueline Kolosov (Hourglass). H. Palmer Hall’s own collection of short stories, Into the Thicket, was published in 2011 by Ink Brush Press.

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Bedrock by Bonnie Lyons

Bonnie Lyons’s first full-length book of poems, In Other Words, was published by Pecan Grove Press in 2004. Her chapbooks, Hinoni (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 Autonóma 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 (TSLL). 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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Wings Press, founded in 1975, has striven to publish multicultural books, chapbooks, ebooks and other literary products that enliven the human spirit and enlighten the mind. Writing is a transformational art form capable of changing the world, primarily by allowing us to glimpse something of each other’s souls. Good writing is innovative, insightful and interesting. But most of all it is honest. This is the Wings creed.

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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 “affershers” 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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Barnes & Noble and Voices de la Luna
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Poetry & Arts Events in San Antonio

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


2nd Tuesdays 7-9 pm – Awaken the Sleeping Poet at the Twig, 200 E. Grayson, Ste. 124, Pearl Brewery (210) 826-6411, Featured poets & open mic. Host: Floyd L. Lamrouex.

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


Tuesdays 10:30 pm – Puro Slam–The Heights–9315 N. Broadway (just north of 410). Weekly open mic certified by the National Poetry Slam allows poets to deliver their work and get heckled. DJ Donnie Dee spins before and after the show. Sign up begins at 9:30 pm. Slam begins @ 10:30 pm. For more information visit www.puros lam.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: Voces de la Luna: 6 pm Poetry Workshop / 7 pm Featured Guest / 8 pm Open Mic

Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm – South Presa Bar and Grill – Open mic: poetry, music, and storytelling Host: Andi.

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

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

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

Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio

“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—The facility includes 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.the carver.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.texan cultures.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 THEATRE—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.majesticempire.com

MCNAY ART MUSEUM—The mission of the McNay Art Museum is to maintain an art museum on the premises of the estate of Mrs. McNay for the advancement and enjoyment of modern and early art, 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/culturamexsai ng/

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.sanoper a.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 hony.org

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF ART—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 September 3): Darwin: How One Man’s Theory Turned the World on Its Head. www.wittemuseum.org