A Conversation with and a Poem by Natasha Trethewey
Arathi: School of Indian Dance by Rajam Ramamurthy
“We’re All Optimists Here” by Sheila Black
150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation
# Table of Contents

## Voices de la Luna, Volume 5, Number 2

| Note from a Physician-Artist, Habib Nathan, M.D. | 3 |
| Cover Page Art: Street Car Scene by John Wilson | 4 |
| 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation | 4 |

## Featured Poem

We’re All Optimists Here, Sheila Black  

## Featured Interview

Conversation with Natasha Trethewey, Jeffrey Brown, edited by Mo H Saidi  

## Collaboration in Literature & Arts

The UTSA English Department  
Friday Midnight Rain, Jane D. Dare  
Poem for Richard Brautigan, Marissa Vega  
New Pears, Storage, Susannah Hollister  
Creative Writing Reading Series  

## Book Reviews

Sunflower Cantos (Robin Scofield), Marian Haddad  
11/22/63 (Stephen King), James R. Adair  
Jade: The Law (Robert Flynn), James R. Adair  
Arathi: School of Indian Dance (Rajam Ramamarthy)  
Blue Vengeance (Ira Cates)  
The Jetty (Jay Brandon and Joe Labatt), Mo H Saidi  

## Youth Poems

Pink, Natalie Torres  
Mother Nature, Sofia Greimel-Garza  
Love is Dead, Caitlin Beckham  
What Is Yellow, Ava Redmond  

## Select Poems

Drought, Lee Robinson  
***Poems by Nineteenth-Century African American Poets***  
A Billet Doux, George Moses Horton  
A Poem (excerpts), James Monroe Whitfield  
Wordsworth, Charlotte Forton Grimké  
In Louisiana, The Day After the Proclamation  
Was Read, Alan Birkelbach  
On Writing, Peter Holland  
The Others, Jim LaVilla-Havelin  
“It Might Have Been,” Billy Jackson  
in case you were wondering, Claire Stevens  
Divorce, Sherry Craven  
Secrets, Sally Clark  
Congress’ Lines, Hana Kapasi  
***Twelve Voices from One: Poetic Responses to Art***  
Hunting Owl, Lou Taylor, responding to the  
“The Hunt,” a beautifully dyed, hand-painted,  
and quilted piece by artist Leslie Rego  
A Love Story, Edna Kitchen, inspired by the art  
of Judy Carpenter, “Letters Home”  
Negative Space, Richard Luftig  

## International Poems

No Disminuyas las Libertad de los Otros, Amado Nervo  
(Do Not Trivialize the Freedom of Others,  
trans. Gerard S. Robledo)  
Salvador Díaz Mirón, Rubén Darío  
(trans. Gerard S. Robledo)  
Himmelsglut, Hejo Müller  
(Skies Aglow, trans. James Brandenburg)  

## Art & Culture in the City

“All the World’s a Stage”: Our Lady of the Lake University Literary Festival, Nan Cuba  
Aphrodite and the Gods of Love (SAMA)  
Brahms Festival (San Antonio Symphony)  
Luminaria 2013  
Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest: TMI’s Inaugural Participation, Mo H Saidi  
Poetry & Arts Events in San Antonio  
Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio  

## Poetry Therapy

We Never Have the Whole Story, Jane D. Dare  
Do Not See Me, Sophia E. DiGonis  
Bipolar Essay, Scamus Stanley  
The Wounded Vet, Brandon Chase Bailey  

## Poetry & Dreams

Finding the Way, James Brandenburg  

## Music and Poetry

In the Green Alley, music by Daniel Parker, poem by Mo H Saidi  

## Art Therapy

What Does an Art Therapist Do? Maripat Munley  
A Pebble among Millions, Tracy Brown  
Every Day, Earl Salazar  
Beneath, Celeste Delarosa  
I’m Here … Always, Frances R. Ford  

## News & Notes

How Spain Was Won and Lost: The Moors in Spain, Brigitte B. Saidi
Flynn Inducted into Texas Literary Hall of Fame 21
Philip Roth Announces His Retirement 21
Roman Catholic Church Announces Two New Doctors of the Church, Fourth Woman 21
The Lasting Impact of the BP Oil Spill 21
Juneteenth: An Emancipation Celebration 24
The Impact of the Gettysburg Address 31
Gettysburg Address 31
Dining with Federico García Lorca (1898-1936): The Sevilla Restaurant 32

Essays
Where is the Syrian Revolution Going? Lahab Assef Al-Jundi 30
From Afar, Debra Peña 32
The Church and Prejudice, Frederick Douglass 33

Short Fiction
The Bridge, Juan R. Garcia 34
Not a Second Too Soon, John Richmond 36
A Nun and Her Boy, Woodrow Hopper 37
Butterfly Collection, James R. Adair 38

Serialized Novel
Persian Marchers, Chapter Thirteen, Mo H Saidi 39

San Antonio Small Presses
Word Design Studio 29
Pecan Grove Press 42
Wings Press 42

Our Sponsors
Submission Guidelines 43

Note from a Physician-Artist
Habib Nathan, M.D.
Member, Voices de la Luna Board of Directors

Voices de la Luna is now five years old, and under the leadership of the boards of directors and advisors and the hard work of the editors and staff, it has thrived and produced a valuable literary journal.

We are preparing to stage the fourth annual fundraiser on April 17, 2013, at the Bright Shawl. This year the event is very special for us because we are collaborating with the San Antonio Public Library Foundation-L3 Committee to honor San Antonio’s Inaugural Poet Laureate, Carmen Tafolla, at the event. Of course, we are also celebrating National Poetry Month by recognizing the physician-artists and -writers of San Antonio at this event and have invited a group of physicians to direct the preparation and organization of the program.

In this issue, we are pleased to publish a poem and an excerpt from a conversation Jeffrey Brown of the PBS NewsHour conducted with US Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey. We are grateful to Trethewey and the PBS NewsHour for permission to publish these pieces. Last November, Trethewey visited UTSA and presented a reading of her latest book, Thrall, to a standing-room-only audience.

We are also celebrating a very special anniversary: on January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued an executive order declaring the emancipation of slaves in the Confederate States. Lincoln first proposed the idea of an Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet in the summer of 1862 as a war measure to cripple the Confederacy. Lincoln reasoned that if the slaves in the Southern States were freed, then the Confederacy could no longer use them to support the army in the field, which would diminish the effectiveness of the Confederate war effort. As an astute politician, however, Lincoln needed to prove that the Union government could enforce the Proclamation and protect freed slaves. On September 22, 1862, following the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued; this preliminary executive order would go into effect three months later on January 1, 1863.

As a psychiatrist, I believe in the motto of Voices de la Luna: poetry heals and arts advance the quality of life. In order to make a difference in this world, we must have a passion for something and turn that passion into a vision. Writing poetry and producing art present a dramatic venue for people in all walks of life and of every age and social status to express their feelings in the most creative way. Artists, poets, physicians, educators, and business people carry a wealth of creative talents which may be exhibited in many ways, including arts and literature.

Physician-writers and -artists have always been at the forefront of this movement—for example, Leo Tolstoy, William Carlos Williams, and Abraham Verghese. I would like to invite all local physicians to participate in artistic and literary activities and become part of this exciting trend. And join us at our annual fundraiser!
John Wilson grew up in Roxbury, MA, and attended classes at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He received a B.S. degree from Tufts University and then, like many other African American artists, found artistic fulfillment as an expatriate in Paris, where he studied with Fernand Léger. In 1950, with the aid of a John Hay Whitney Fellowship, he moved to Mexico City to study at the Esmeralda School of Art. After Mexico, Wilson settled in Chicago before moving to New York, where he worked as a commercial artist. He later returned to Boston, where he still teaches at the Museum of Fine Arts. His art appears in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Modern Art, Smith College Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Harmon and Harriet Kelley Collection of African American Art.

*Street Car Scene (1945)* is a deeply telling image showing the isolation and loneliness that African Americans suffered. This picture depicts the war effort, in which a black naval yard worker with his lunch box sits proudly showing his naval yard button. Although integration has granted him the right to sit anywhere on the bus, he is truly “Alone in the Crowd.” Although he is very proud to be able to serve his country in this way, no one on the bus is paying him any attention. To the other passengers he does not exist.

A copy of this print was on the cover of a catalogue entitled “Alone in a Crowd, Prints from the 1930s African-American Artists, from the Collection of Reb and Dave Williams.” Another copy hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This version is owned by the Kelley Art Foundation.

*Reprinted with permission of Harriet Kelley, Chair, Kelley Art Foundation.*

150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation

On Jan 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued an executive order declaring that all enslaved persons who lived in parts of the Union that were in rebellion against the United States (i.e., the Confederacy) were immediately and permanently released from bondage, and he ordered the army to enforce his order. Although the army was unable to enforce the decree in most parts of the Confederate states, as they captured Southern territory they did free the slaves in those areas. The Emancipation Proclamation freed about 3.1 million of the four million slaves living in the United States at the time. Slaves living in border states that had not joined the Confederacy (Missouri, Kentucky, Delaware, and Maryland), along with those living in areas under Union control such as New Orleans and surrounding parishes, were not freed by the proclamation. Emancipation of all the slaves in the United States was finally accomplished by the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment on Dec 6, 1865.
Featured Poem

We’re All Optimists Here
Sheila Black*

The light that shines over the damp rooftops and frozen yards is weightless. So is the breath of the three men waiting for the morning bus, their cupped hands, wet wool jackets. And the tree branches like the bones in a hand. You can never remember how many, only that there are more than you might imagine, and when crushed they make a dust that glitters, that is not pale, but the hard amber of all that seen use. Bourbon sugar, tobacco stain, the feel of a white oven spattered by long grease until you wonder what it is to give up at long last or what road you take to arrive there—the fretwork of the mind like these wet trees of early November, which tremble in the wind as if eager to shed their last tracery of leaf, whatever might hold them. Guy de Maupassant who wrote scenes of such crystalline clarity—those garrisons and ballrooms, the train car where the peasant woman nurses the starving soldier, who died crawling across a floor, unable to remember even his own name. And Isaac Babel who wrote the great story that ends in Maupassant’s death was never seen after 1941. Shot in one of 476 camps of the Gulag, his bones scattered in Norvisk, Vorkota or far Kolyma. Across the street from my house, children walk to school along the sidewalks, swinging their lunch boxes, lugging their backpacks. A boy looks at his feet as if they no longer belonged to him. The grass he strays over is a sheet of pale gold, demure as a bridal veil—no longer dead; yet not alive either. The knowledge that touches Babel with light fingers, what he reads in Maupassant shitting himself on the floor is simply that of no protection. Not even words. Somewhere this moment someone is dying who never wrote even a letter—tangle of thoughts which perish wordless, unnoticed as the blades’ slow stiffening, or the watery song of the mockingbird which lingers now in the arms of the bare locust. Above the breath of sky, a light which descends like cold coins on eyes. I think of Babel writing that no iron touches the heart like a period in exactly the right place.

*Sheila Black received her BA from Barnard College and her MFA from the University of Montana. In 2000, she was the co-winner of the Pellicer-Frost Frontera Prize, given to a U.S. and a Mexican poet living along the U.S.-Mexico border. She is the co-editor with Jennifer Bartlett and Michael Northen of Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability (Cinco Puntos Press), named a Notable Book for 2012 by the American Library Association. She received a Witter Bynner Fellowship in Poetry for 2012, selected by Philip Levine. She lives in San Antonio, Texas, where she is Executive Director of Gemini Ink, a literary arts center.

Gemini Ink
Readers and Writers: Today and Tomorrow
San Antonio, Texas

Gemini Ink is a non-profit literary arts organization that nurtures writers and readers and builds community through literature and the related arts. For more info visit: http://www.geminiink.org/.

Drought
Lee Robinson

We hunker down against the heat, close the curtains, shut the blinds. We live our lives inside: we say this can’t go on forever.

We eat too much, go on a diet, play cards, peruse the catalogues, pay bills, flip through old magazines. Take sleepless naps. Late afternoon, when thunder shakes the floor and sends a shiver down the walls, we huddle in bed and celebrate the cool, charged air, but when the storm is over we lie together in our pool of sweat more parched than ever. You turn the TV on, click past the latest Baghdad bombings to the local weather. I close my eyes.

You should know better, my sweet, than to keep hoping for a break in the heat.


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A Conversation with Natasha Trethewey
Prepared by Mo H Saidi

Including an excerpt and video from MacNeil / Lehrer Productions, PBS Newshour, used with permission

Natasha Trethewey’s visit to San Antonio and her reading as part of UTSA’s Creative Writing Reading Series on the evening of Friday, November 18, 2012, drew a crowd of over 400 people, standing room only. It was a glowing night for poetry in San Antonio and a testament to the vital role that UTSA and its English Department play to advance literature in San Antonio and South Texas.

After the reading and at a late-night reception at the home of Dr. and Mrs. David Friedman, I had the privilege of conversing with Trethewey and presenting the 15 October issue of Voïces de la Luna to her. She generously signed her latest book of poetry, Thrall, and extended permission to publish any of her poems in Voices. Because the questions I asked her for this article were very similar to those in her interview with Jeffrey Brown of the PBS Newshour on 21 September 2012, she suggested we print an excerpt from that interview for this article.

Natasha Trethewey was born in Gulfport, Mississippi. She is the author of four collections of poetry: Domestic Work (Graywolf Press, 2000), Bellocq’s Ophelia (Graywolf, 2002), Native Guard (Houghton Mifflin, 2006)—for which she was awarded the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry—and Thrall (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, August 2012). She is also the author of a book of creative non-fiction, Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast (University of Georgia Press, 2010).

Her first poetry collection, Domestic Work, won the inaugural 1999 Cave Canem poetry prize (selected by Rita Dove), a 2001 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Book Prize, and the 2001 Lillian Smith Award for Poetry. Her second collection, Bellocq’s Ophelia, received the 2003 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Book Prize, was a finalist for both the Academy of American Poets’ James Laughlin and Lenore Marshall prizes, and was named a 2003 Notable Book by the American Library Association.

Her work has appeared in several volumes of Best American Poetry and in journals such as Agni, American Poetry Review, Callaloo, Gettysburg Review, Kenyon Review, New England Review, and The Southern Review, among others.

She received a B.A. in English from the University of Georgia, an M.A. in English and Creative Writing from Hollins University, and an M.F.A in poetry from the University of Massachusetts. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and the National Endowment for the Arts. During the 2005-2006 academic year, she was Lehman Brady Joint Chair Professor of Documentary and American Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and in 2009 she was the James Weldon Johnson Fellow in African American Studies at the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

Trethewey is also the recipient of the 2008 Mississippi Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts and was named the 2008 Georgia Woman of the Year. In 2009 she was inducted into the Fellowship of Southern Writers, and in 2011 she was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame. In 2012 she was named Poet Laureate of the state of Mississippi and the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States.

Excerpt from the Jeffrey Brown Interview
To peruse the entire interview, please visit www.voicesdelaluna.com
or http://video.pbs.org/video/2282265816/

JEFFREY BROWN: The laureate post sometimes is given to an older, well-established sort of star of the poetry world. You are younger, mid-career, still out and about, growing.

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: That’s right.

JEFFREY BROWN: There is the proverbial, “What is the role of poetry in our culture anyway?” It’s always interesting that here we are in the middle of a political campaign. You hear a lot of one kind of rhetoric. Poetry is a different kind of language, right?

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: That’s right, that’s right. Poetry is—I said this the other day, I think—it’s way more diplomatic than we ever are in our everyday lives.

JEFFREY BROWN: What does that mean?

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: Because it can speak to all of us. It helps us not only to grieve our losses but to celebrate our joys and triumphs. It is open to all of us. It’s the best thing we’ve got. It’s the most humane repository for our feelings and our thoughts, our most humane and dignified thoughts.

JEFFREY BROWN: Your new book, you have it there. It picks up on some themes that we’ve talked about before here, I know, your interest in history, in family, your own family’s experience of race. Tell me about the new book.

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: The new book started with an investigation of Mexican casta paintings. I was very interested in these because they represented the mixed-blood unions that were taking place in the colony across the 18th century. I was, of course, drawn to them because they had the picture of the parents as well as the offspring and the taxonomy, the names created for those mixed-blood children. So it was like looking at portraits of my own family.

JEFFREY BROWN: Well explain that to people. That is, your own history. As I recall, an illegal marriage at the time.

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: That’s right. My parents had to go to Ohio to get married in 1965 because it was still illegal in Mississippi. My white father and black mother.

JEFFREY BROWN: What is it that you want to look at through the poems, when you want to explore that history?

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: I’m trying to make sense of my own contemporary experience across time and space. To make sense
of myself through the lens of history. These things are not new to us; they’ve been going on for a long time, and people have been thinking about them for a long time, and my experience now is reflected through that larger public history.

JEFFREY BROWN: Is there a poem you could read for us?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: Yes. I’d like to read a poem that’s a slightly different take on the elegy, because my father is still alive.

Elegy
For my father

I think by now the river must be thick
with salmon. Late August, I imagine it
as it was that morning: drizzle needling
the surface, mist at the banks like a net
settling around us—everything damp
and shining. That morning, awkward
and heavy in our hip waders, we stalked
into the current and found our places—
you upstream a few yards, and out
far deeper. You must remember how
the river seeped in over your boots,
and you grew heavy with that defeat.

All day I kept turning to watch you, how
first you mimed our guide’s casting,
then cast your invisible line, slicing the sky
between us; and later, rod in hand, how
you tried—again and again—to find
that perfect arc, flight of an insect
skimming the river’s surface. Perhaps
you recall I cast my line and reeled in
two small trout we could not keep.
Because I had to release them, I confess,

I thought about the past—working
the hooks loose, the fish writhing
in my hands, each one slipping away
before I could let go. I can tell you now
that I tried to take it all in, record it
for an elegy I’d write—one day—
when the time came. Your daughter,
I was that ruthless. What does it matter
if I tell you I learned to be? You kept casting
your line, and when it did not come back
empty, it was tangled with mine. Some nights,
dreaming, I step again into the small boat
that carried us out and watch the bank receding—
my back to where I know we are headed.

JEFFREY BROWN: An elegy for your father even though he’s still alive. What made you want to do that?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: The poem actually elegizes something else, not the loss of the person but a loss of a certain kind of relationship with the person. So he’s still here, but some part of our relationship as father and daughter has changed. It’s different now. The older I get, the older he gets.

JEFFREY BROWN: For those who you know, don’t get poetry or feel disconnected from it, do you think of them when you are writing and, of course, now that you are taking on a very public role as the laureate?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: I do think of them when I’m writing, because even though I’m the daughter of a poet I think I felt like that myself at some point.

JEFFREY BROWN: You felt disconnected or …
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: Yes, I think I felt at some point that I couldn’t understand poetry or that it was beyond me or it didn’t speak to my experience. I think that was because I hadn’t yet found the right poems to invite me in. I think there is a poem out there for everyone, to be an entrance into the poetry and a relationship with it.

JEFFREY BROWN: What was it for you that will help people? Whom did you read or whom do you read?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: I was going to say, when my mother died the poem that made sense to me and invited me into poetry was Auden’s “Musee des Beaux Arts.” That begins, “About suffering they were never wrong, the old masters.” You know, it’s a poem that goes on to describe how this tiny little image of Icarus falling into the sea while everything else is going on around the world, that’s what grief sometimes feels like, that you are the only person experiencing it and the whole world is going on about its business without you. That actually comforted me in my loss.

JEFFREY BROWN: That’s a very personal take on things. Are you excited now about the public role that you are taking on?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: I think so. I’m very—

JEFFREY BROWN: You think so?
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: I think I am. I’m a little, well, you know, it’s a big responsibility, and I want to do it well, and so that means that I’m a little anxious about it, and so it means that I’m also going to try very hard to find the best ways to do it.

Voices de la Luna is grateful to Annette Miller, Vice-President of McNeil / Lehrer Productions, for extending permission to use this interview.
Friday Midnight Rain
Jane D. Dare
UTSA English-Creative Writing Student

coming down black and sideways
people begin to pull over, pull off
put it in park to wait, afraid.

My metallic-blue Isuzu is
under torrents, and the AC coughs up
humid phlegm; Big Blue is twenty
years old, his intake valves like cracked
and wrinkled skin and Interstates are
no longer a friendly place.

I float four-wheel drive past cars
without life vests, passengers
blur into specters behind shower-
glass windows, peeking, while a banshee
cries, and home is still many nautical
miles away.

Huebner and I-10 police looking like
scuba divers, signal red flares to tell
Big Blue and other traffic, exit here now

I slog down the ramp; I am caught
by the surreal blend of Interstate
street lamps, gray mist, bare-swept cement

Eastbound I-10 is dead. Two ambulances
doors closed tightly, no human in sight
but five cop cars, lights out, windows

charcoal dark, they sit at odd angles to the
side rails, to the center stripe, to each other
motionless.

All this must be someone’s Photoshop, an
arrested snap-shot: grand haloes around
the light poles, radiated golden dust

sparkles on each particle of nighttime. I
turn my head (while the steering and rolling
wheels crawl in unnatural, impossible

slow motion) to see sopping hair trailing
behind a woman drenched, too thin
to be safe alone, standing behind the trunk

of her green Hertz economy car; frozen
looking west as wretched despair tramples
her pretty face. I follow her morbid
trance-like gaze to a canary-colored body bag,
almost regal, laid out in Kinkade light
transcendent luminescence.

In sadness like syrup, I drive further along.
My eyes brush past the praying woman; a quarter-

mile east, a motorcycle straddles the far side median

pitch black and silver pieces of Harley-Davidson
demon-sparkle in the lightning flashes
as Thunder Gods join the Gaelic wailing winds.

Climbing to Loop 410, I rise like steam
hovered above the panorama
shaken by these shades of Fate

Friday midnight rain coming down black
and sideways on someone’s canvas
on an all too perfect Still Life.

Poem for Richard Brautigan
Marissa Vega
UTSA English-Creative Writing Student

We, who were two kids
stole away one winter’s break
got bundled up in blankets
sat in strange-smelling buses
and dripping vents
charcoal dark, they sit at odd angles to the
side rails, to the center stripe, to each other
motionless.

All this must be someone’s Photoshop, an
arrested snap-shot: grand haloes around
the light poles, radiated golden dust

sparkles on each particle of nighttime. I
turn my head (while the steering and rolling
wheels crawl in unnatural, impossible

slow motion) to see sopping hair trailing
behind a woman drenched, too thin
to be safe alone, standing behind the trunk

We, who were two kids
sifted your ashes through a plastic
funnel, into an hourglass
just so we could know how
long a Brautigan hour
really lasts
Two Poems by Susannah Hollister

New Pears

more like potatoes, each amassing
a single pale body, its heavier bulb not yet
distributed toward earth, but shrugging through a still
vertical shaft, feeling out the farthest distance
within itself from its original blossom

Storage

Who wouldn’t stay, wouldn’t want
to require so little, where
winter slicks make each boat
a skin, a solid of white shallows
taut to the sky, all that falls
from above will slide off,
keep falling, close to unchanged
and the boat is close to absent,
the blank of a boat,
will catch just a sample, the least
of this arriving moment, will let
circulate almost all of the whitening
port and its portion of sky.

Susannah Hollister is co-editor, with Emily Setina, of Gertrude Stein’s Stanzas in Meditation: The Corrected Edition (Yale UP, 2012). Her work on 20th- and 21st-century poetry has appeared, or will appear soon, in Contemporary Literature, Twentieth-Century Literature, Chicago Review, and Bat City Review. She is currently a lecturer in English at UTSA and a visiting scholar at UT-Austin. Before moving to Texas, she taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point and earned her PhD from Yale University. She lives in San Antonio.
UTSA Creative Writing Reading Series

The UTSA Creative Writing Reading Series was inaugurated in 1983 when Carolyn Forché read on a Friday afternoon to a room of 100 people. Over the years the series has hosted such writers as Mary Oliver, Ernest Gaines, Tobias Wolff, Denise Levertov, Alberto Ríos, Pat Mora, Diane Wakoski, Edward Hirsch, and many other poets and fiction writers who not only have given public readings but also have visited classes and met with students about their writing. We’ve had as many as twelve readings by visiting writers in a year but have settled on three or four annually as an ideal number. This reading series is made possible through the generosity of our donors.

Participants in the series so far this year have included Matthea Harvey in October and Natasha Trethewey, the current U.S. poet laureate, in November. Scheduled for the spring are Levi Romero (Feb 1) and Teju Cole (Feb 22), both at 7:30 in the Harris Room (UC III 2.212) on the UTSA main campus.

Levi Romero  Teju Cole

“All the World’s a Stage”: Our Lady of the Lake University Literary Festival

Nan Cuba, Assistant Professor of English, OLLU

Created in 1996, Our Lady of the Lake University’s Literary Festival is a week-long series of literary events presented by internationally-renowned poets, scholars, and authors, such as Robert Coover, John Philip Santos, Dorothy Allison, Alicia Ostriker, Janet Burroway, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Oscar Hijuelos. The range of events and the stature of guest writers have attracted audience members from as far away as Virginia and have inspired OLLU students and Westside residents to think in challenging ways about literature, as well as cultural and artistic issues. Audience size has grown to an annual average of 1,000. Events are free and open to the public.

The next OLLU Literary Festival is April 2-9, and once again, the lineup is stellar. Under the title “All the World’s a Stage,” the festival’s headliner is Antonya Nelson. She is the author of six short story collections, including The Expendables, which won the Flannery O’Connor Award, and four novels, including Talking in Bed, which received the Heartland Award. Her work has appeared in The New Yorker, Esquire, Harper’s, and Redbook, as well as anthologies such as Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards and Best American Short Stories. Her books have repeatedly been New York Times notable books, and The New Yorker named her one of the “twenty young fiction writers for the new millennium.” Nelson is praised for the beauty of her writing and for her exploration of the emotional terrain of women. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Richard Blanco is the OLLU Spring 2013 Visiting Writer, and he’ll be reading from his new poetry collection, Looking for The Gulf Motel. His first book of poetry, City of a Hundred Fires, explores the yearnings and negotiation of cultural identity as a Cuban-American; it received the Agnes Starrett Poetry Prize. His second book, Directions to the Beach of the Dead, won the Beyond Margins Award from the PEN American Center. His poems have appeared in journals such as The Nation, the New Republic, Poughshares, Michigan Quarterly Review, and TriQuarterly Review, as well as anthologies such as The Best American Poetry and Great American Prose Poems. He has been featured on national Public Radio’s All Things Considered.

Noted scholar T. Walter Herbert, professor of English emeritus at Southwestern University, will deliver a lecture on Herman Melville’s global consciousness. Herbert is the only person who has been president of both the Hawthorne and Melville Societies.


Friday, April 5, is High School Day, and approximately 450 students will hear David Liss, author of five novels and the comics The Spider #1 and four issues of Black Panther: The Man Without Fear. Liss and his friend and former co-owner of Atomic Comics, John Minton, will share their experiences writing and publishing comics. Jenny Browne, author of two poetry collections and a chapbook, will inspire students that afternoon. Browne has been published in American Poetry Review, Gulf Coast, Pleiades, The New York Times, Tin House, and Threepenny Review. She is the editor of Provide and Protect, Writers on Planned and Unplanned Parenthood.

Sandra Cisneros, the OLLU Writer in Residence, will give her usual outstanding presentation, along with Joe Jiménez, winner of the 2012 Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation Award. Jiménez’ collection of poems won the Gertrude Press Poetry Chapbook Prize, and his work has appeared in elimaes, La Petit Zine, and Dino Dinco’s short film El Abuelo.

OLLU Assistant Professor Hayan Charara will give a reading with Fady Joudah at Gemini Ink. There will be another faculty reading, a panel presentation on the recent influx of fairtales in mass media, an open mic reading, the Sigma Tau Delta Favorite Poem Project, a publication party for the OLLU literary journal The Thing Itself; and a performance of All the World’s a Stage, which is a sampler of scenes from Shakespeare, arranged by Mary W. Schaller.

Voices de la Luna, 15 January 2013
Book Reviews

Sunflower Cantos
by Robin Scofield
Reviewed by Marian Haddad

The smart title of Robin Scofield’s recent chapbook, And the Ass Saw the Angel (Mouthfeel Press, 2011), is the springboard for—and sets the tone for—the catalogue of Scofield’s poems/cantos contained in this delightful collection. Scofield has a sharp and wise sense of wit, a superb sense of sound, and a keen attraction to spiritual allusion. There are so many moments in this book that I love, such as the Third and Thirteenth Cantos; but I love them all. I am very impressed with the great sense of white space and pacing and breath that Scofield uses consistently, constantly conscious of the movement of each respective piece. Scofield’s voice is a smart voice, a sassy voice, embedded among and within her lyrical tonality, not dissimilar to classical verse. And, oh, what wit; all of this, at once!

Light-winged dryads of the desert
cross oceans, heroes born in plush
spider web beds and sweet acacia blooms.
What a journey overtakes them, three thousand
miles of storm and squall, no land for three days.
No wonder they think they are big:
attacking the haughty cat, the hawk, the roadrunner
who takes two for dessert. Like flies
bother cows. Each one Odysseus,
intimate with Scylla and Charybdis.
They rise from New Mexico
hot springs, green-backed fairies
that persist to the highland gardens
of petunia, geranium, corn, salvia,
and stories I want to decipher.

Eighth Canto: Los Colibri

As you can see from the fine specimen of the stichic (non-stanzaic) poem above, Scofield weaves a store of knowledge with a seeing eye and further-seeing spirit, even a reverence, clear here, and the surprise, even to the poet, “No wonder they think they are big.”

It is not a surprise to me, the reader, that Scofield leaves herself open to the mystery—“the surprise”—that comes at unexpected intervals within a poem; as it is her spirit, from the day I met and visited with her at the Round Top Poetry Festival, nearly five years ago (and having maintained dialogue with her in regard to poetry, poetic structure, myth, words, ever since that meeting) where I have come to know her as one of the most gentle and quietly-wise spirits (as well as keen and potent) writing poetry today.

This woman’s voice is distinctive, easily fluctuating from a serious subject and tonality to the wit interwoven in many of her poems (not an easy task), and often reminiscent of former US Poet Laureate Billy Collins, who is one of few who can smartly weave humor in a poem and maintain the important message within the respective piece. I underscore the difficulty in successfully doing so, but Scofield has done it. As well, she applies close attention to line, breath, and breadth.

However, in the Eighth Canto, which I chose to share for its lyricism and almost-prayerfulness, the casual reader might easily miss or take for granted the smart pacing and breath very prevalent in this piece, as her attention to pacing and breath and breadth here, in the mentioned canto, is much more subtle than her clearer and more obvious use of spacial implementations in other pieces within this collection.

For instance, the Eighth Canto does not employ isochrony (suspension of breath and words within a line; from the Greek, “equal time”). However, the absence of isochrony or stanzaic formation in this poem is chosen; it is not an accident. The stichic formation serves this poem well, a form Sharon Olds uses regularly and powerfully. The momentum derived from the absence of stanza breaks is obvious here—and Scofield’s decision not to implement stanza breaks and isochronic movement within said poem, clearly, comes from her keen attention to “what” she is doing and “how” she is doing it. She knows what to use, and when, it seems, when it comes to the tools a poet employs on the printed page.

Suffice it to say, I have thoroughly enjoyed Scofield’s chap-book, so pleased to be spirited by all that is offered here. It would not surprise me if Scofield held dear the work of one Ezra Pound, as I sense, to some degree, something of his poetics here, beyond the use of canto—a similar kind of seeing.

11/22/63
by Stephen King
Reviewed by James R. Adair

Have you ever thought about going back in time to change the past? Plenty of science fiction stories, TV shows, and movies deal with this issue, from H. G. Wells’ The Time Machine to the 2009 movie Star Trek. Anyone who has read or watched any of these stories knows the potential pitfalls of time travel, the logical quandaries raised by time travelers interfering with their ancestors (see the Terminator series), and the ethical dilemmas raised by altering the past. Stephen King’s 11/22/63 treats all of these issues, but it also adds a twist only King could conceive: the past fights back.

Jake Epping is a high school English teacher who is introduced to a time portal by a friend who wants him to go back in time to right one of the greatest wrongs in history, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Jake agrees to do what he can, even if it means murdering Lee Harvey Oswald—as long as he is first convinced that Oswald was (will be) indeed the shooter and that he acted alone. He has five years in the past to prepare.

The problem with such a venture, he soon discovers, is that the past is resilient: “it senses change-agents, and it has teeth.” Jake’s preparations take him from his native Maine (of course—
it’s Stephen King, after all) to Florida and eventually to Jodie, Texas, a small town south of Fort Worth, where the Oswalds would live, and Dallas, where Lee would assassinate Kennedy. Along the way he struggles with the past, falls in love with a woman and a bygone era, and rediscovers his true calling in life.

Will Jake succeed in his mission to stop the assassination of JFK? What will be the consequences of his actions, whether or not he succeeds? Can Jake remain in the past that he has grown to love, or must he return to the present—if that’s even possible? 11/22/63 starts small but quickly builds into an exciting adventure that involves the lives of many people, famous and unknown, brought together by the mission of Jake Epping and the conflict with his nemesis, the past.

**Jade: The Law**

_by Robert Flynn_

Reviewed by James R. Adair

If you’re looking for a feel-good western about how the West was won, this book isn’t for you. If you treasure westerns because you can tell the good guys from the bad guys by the color of the hats they wear, don’t read this book, either. If, however, you are looking for a book set in the Old West that treats life’s complexities and ambiguities in a straightforward, no-holds-barred manner, _Jade: The Law_ is a book you’ll want to read. First, though, you’ll want to read this book’s prequel, _Jade: Outlaw_, which provides the background for the main character, Jade; the white woman raised as an Indian, Rain; the dedicated but largely unsuccessful parson, Wilbur; and a cast of characters that fills a Texas town so small that it doesn’t even have a name.

Jade, a former Indian fighter struggling with his past, is the town marshal, and he is in love with Rain—formerly known as Crow Poison—a woman born as a white girl whose heart is now thoroughly Indian. He strives to bring justice to the town, but how can justice be served when the whole town is guilty of a horrendous crime? What alternatives are there for women who turn to whoring to feed themselves or their children? When laws favor rich white men, especially those with connections in the state government, what recourse do others have? When corporations, like the expanding railroad empires, have politicians in their pockets, how can justice be achieved? When the unreconstructed bigots of the South collude with the moneyed interests of the North to attain mutually beneficial goals, do Indians, Blacks, women of uncertain ethnic heritage, Irish, Germans, and others outside the halls of power have a chance?

_Jade: The Law_ is not an ordinary western. Like Clark’s _The Ox-Bow Incident_, Flynn’s book is a morality play set in the Old West. Flynn avoids simplistic solutions to complex problems. Far from romanticizing the Texas of the late nineteenth century, he portrays it in all its squalor, yet always with a touch of charm. _Jade: The Law_ doesn’t offer the reader easy answers to life’s difficult questions. In that sense, it’s a very modern novel.

**How Spain was Won & Lost: The Moors in Spain**

_By Brigitte B. Saidi_

Adapted from en.wikipedia.org and http://www.spanish-web.com/history/moors

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, Spain was conquered by a Christian tribe, the Visigoths, who professed a version of Christianity called “Arian” by their detractors. Arians were noted for their openmindedness. They encouraged free and careful debate on any point of faith and tolerated other religions, such as Judaism or Paganism, in their midst. Their capital was Toledo, which had been a Roman administrative center since the second century BCE. Spain converted to a Catholic form of Christianity in 587.

At the beginning of the seventh century, Islam rapidly expanded across the Middle East and North Africa by defeating the Persians and overrunning the remnants of the Western Roman Empire. Large numbers of Moorish tribes in North Africa accepted Arabic as their language and Islam as their religion. Tariq ibn-Ziyad, a great Berber chief, was given the rank of general in the Arab army and was sent to raid Spain. In April 711, he landed on the Spanish Coast with 7,000 troops, 300 of them Arabs and 6,700 native North African Moors. In only eight years Tariq brought most of Iberia under Islamic rule. His brand of Islam was explicitly tolerant of other Abrahamic faiths. The Moors fought their way northeast across the Pyrenees, but they were eventually stopped by the Franks under Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours (or Poitiers) in 732. Thereafter the Moors settled down to enjoy 760 years of rule over the Iberian Peninsula. When the “Christian kings” Isabel and Ferdinand finally vanquished the last Moorish King in 1492 and completed the Reconquista, Spain had been living under the Moors almost as many years as we today are removed from the era of the Magna Carta.

Much of Spain is irrevocably bound up with Moorish times. Houses on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar follow the same plan for their public and private spaces, with walled gardens and caged balconies overlooking public squares. Contemporary Spanish architects still use that design idiom for today’s domestic dwellings. The roots of Spanish flamenco evolved in the 16th century when Gypsies, Jews, and Muslims took refuge from forced conversion in the Andalucian mountains. Many of Spain’s architectural treasures owe their existence to the Moors, from forbidding castles like the Alcazaba to sparkling hilltop towns like Ronda, visited by many poets and writers. Moorish architects invented finely carved and gilded marble stucco lattice work that permitted the use of spindly thin marble columns in place of heavy stone walls, creating magical spaces like those of the Alhambra in Granada or the grand mosque in Córdoba.
Art in the City

San Antonio Museum of Art Presents
*Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*
September 15, 2012—February 17, 2013
http://www.samuseum.org/exhibitions

Known today as the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, or Venus to the Romans, was one of the most powerful Greek divinities and a favorite subject in ancient art. This groundbreaking exhibition reveals this most popular ancient goddess in her roles as instigator of sexual desire, patroness of brides, seafarers and warriors, agent of political harmony, adulterous seductress, and mother to mischievous Eros. The exhibition features 125 statues, vases, terracotta and bronze figures, mirrors and jewelry from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston’s world-renowned Greek and Roman collection together with seven breathtaking works from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples. Aphrodite and the Gods of Love will be the first special exhibition focused on the art and culture of ancient Greece in the San Antonio Museum of Art’s history. This exhibition was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Brahms Festival*
http://www.sasymphony.org/2012/06/brahms-festival/

Imagine eight great symphonic masterpieces by Johannes Brahms in just ten days with four symphonies, two piano concertos, a violin concerto and the double concerto for violin and cello. After successful Tchaikovsky and Beethoven festivals in consecutive years, Sebastian Lang-Lessing’s Brahms Festival is sure to attract sell-out crowds. The addition of three world-class soloists makes this event even more spectacular. New this season: two Discover concerts on Sundays to get an inside look at Brahms’s symphonies.

Twenty artistic partnerships are planned. Chamber music, choral works, and organ pieces will be performed in January and February 2013. The four symphony concerts are part of the Classics series. Friday and Saturday night each weekend will have different programs. For the full Brahms Festival schedule visit BrahmsSA.com, www.voicesdelaluna.com, or www.sasymphony.org.

*The Brahms Festival is sponsored by The Russell Hill Rogers Fund for the Arts.

Luminaria 2013
March 9, 2013, 7 PM to 12 AM

Luminaria is San Antonio’s annual night celebration of art and artists. It is free of charge and showcases all art forms including visual arts, music, theater and performance art, literature, multimedia displays, and dance. Luminaria takes place in downtown San Antonio in both outdoor and indoor venues.

Luminaria spotlights artists from San Antonio and all over the country. It is made possible through the generosity of artists, arts organizations, volunteers, and public and private donations. This event is overseen by many of San Antonio’s creative leaders.

Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest:
TMI’s Inaugural Participation
Mo H Saidi

In 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation joined to create the Poetry Out Loud program to encourage youth to learn about great poetry through exploration, memorization, and performance. After a successful one-year pilot program, Poetry Out Loud was launched in high schools across the country. The state winners will receive $200 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete at the national finals. The national champion receives a $20,000 award, the second place winner is awarded $10,000, and the third place winner is given $5,000. Fourth to ninth place winners each receive $1,000. In addition, their schools will receive $500 each to purchase poetry books. TMI in San Antonio was the only local high school that participated in the 2012 competition. The ten selected students from each grade recited great poems and were judged by three published poets and a member of the TMI faculty. The first place winner was Seeley Stephens (11th grade, shown on the left), and the runner-up was Lauren Chu (12th grade, middle). Mr. William R. Bell (on the right) moderated the evening. For more information about this program, please visit http://poetryoutloud.org.
Pink
Natalie Torres
Communications Arts High School

Pink sings in a soprano
Wears loud colors and has deep bedtime eyes
Snacks on crunchy, chilled vegetables at 4:59
Kisses blue with hard confidence
Doesn’t know her father

Mother Nature
Sofia Greimel-Garza
Communications Arts High School

Thank you for the guiding ground below us,
Thank you for the shining sky painted above us,
Thank you for the glistening water that cradles our canoes,
Thank you for the cool relieving breeze brought to us in times of heat,
Thank you for the footholds carefully left for our feet on otherwise slippery rocks,
Thank you for the whispers of “Keep going, we’re here with you” from the trees against our skin as we maneuver through portages,
Thank you for the bone-deep love we feel surging from these beautiful lakes and forests,
The knowledge that here, in this barely touched land,
Grows the soul of the world,
Here for us to experience,
Here to teach us,
Here to show us what is needed of us,
Here to inspire us.
And what better people to be inspired with.

Love is Dead
Caitlin Beckham
Communications Arts High School

A stone cold heart full of red
The dying man lying in his bed.
His wife looks innocent, does she not?
None was known about the poison she bought.
Nice and sweet went every drop
The evidence and residue she did mop.
To know he loved her, did she? No
For she was a wicked creature like a crow.
His life does slowly tick away
He knows his wife was cast astray.
The time has come with bottle in hand
Before she can he slips her his wedding band.
“Forever I will love and forgive you,
Thank you for at least saying I do.”
Without thinking she lets the poison run
To think, his life is all but done.
“Love is dead,” the wife says
But from her cheek a tear falls full of dread.

What Is Yellow
Ava Redmond
Cambridge Elementary School

What’s yellow?
leaves are yellow
floating in the air
they cover the meadows.

What is red?
A ruby’s red
Like a tiara
Shining on your head.

What is brown?
Monkeys are brown
Jumping from the trees
All the way down.

What is blue?
Blue jay is blue
flying from tree to tree
around and through.

What is green?
When the sun shines
and grass grows
my yard turns green.
Poems by Nineteenth-Century African American Poets

A Billet Doux
George Moses Horton

My brightest hopes are mix’d with tears,
Like hues of light and gloom;
As when mid sun-shine rain appears,
Love rises with a thousand fears,

To pine and still to bloom.
When I have told my last fond tale
In lines of song to thee,
And for departure spread my sail,
Say, lovely princess, wilt thou fail
To drop a tear for me?

O, princess, should my votive strain
Salute thy ear no more,
Like one deserted on the main,
I still shall gaze, alas! but vain,
On wedlock’s flow’ry shore.

A Poem (excerpts)
James Monroe Whitfield

Written for the Celebration of the Fourth Anniversary of President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation

To P. A. BELL, Esq., A PIONEER IN THE INTELLECTUAL ELEVATION OF HIS RACE, THESE LINES ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR

More than two centuries have passed
Since, holding on their stormy way,
Before the furious wintry blast,
Upon a dark December day,
Two sails, with different intent,
Approached the Western Continent.
One vessel bore as rich a freight
As ever yet has crossed the wave;
The living germs to form a State
That knows no master, owns no slave.
She bore the pilgrims to that strand
Which since is rendered classic soil,
Where all the honors of the land
May reach the hardy sons of toil.
The other bore the baleful seeds
Of future fratricidal strife,
The germ of dark and bloody deeds,
Which prey upon a nation’s life.
The trafficker in human souls
Had gathered up and chained his prey,
And stood prepared to call the rolls,

When, anchored in Virginia’s Bay—
His captives landed on her soil,
Defied the power of the throne,
And bravely proved the people’s might,
When banded in a righteous cause,
To overthrow oppressive laws.

..............................................................

Poet of the serene and thoughtful lay!
In youth’s fair dawn, when the soul, still untried,
Longs for life’s conflict, and seeks restlessly
Food for its cravings in the stirring songs,
The thrilling strains of more impassioned bards;
Or, eager for fresh joys, culls with delight
The flowers that bloom in fancy’s fairy realm—
We may not prize the mild and steadfast ray
That streams from thy pure soul in tranquil song
But, in our riper years, when through the heat
And burden of the day we struggle on,
Breasting the stream upon whose shores we dreamed,
Weary of all the turmoil and the din
Which drowns the finer voices of the soul;
We turn to thee, true priest of Nature’s fane,
And find the rest our fainting spirits need,—
The calm, more ardent singers cannot give;
As in the glare intense of tropic days,
Gladly we turn from the sun’s radiant beams,
And grateful hail fair Luna’s tender light.

Wordsworth
Charlotte Forten Grimké

Poet of the serene and thoughtful lay!
In youth’s fair dawn, when the soul, still untried,
Longs for life’s conflict, and seeks restlessly
Food for its cravings in the stirring songs,
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And grateful hail fair Luna’s tender light.
Select Poems

In Louisiana, The Day After the Proclamation Was Read

Alan Birkelbach

Take a deep breath. It’s the freeing wind of God.
It’s a good thing.
Tonight there will be dancing
because we heard the words.
We heard them. There was some confusion.
But we heard the words. We’ve heard words before.
We’d been melting down lead for bullets,
and sewing, and cooking, and being unpaid soldiers.
But tomorrow some people say that stops.
That’s what some people think.
Tonight there will be dancing.
But the war isn’t over.
Tomorrow the whip might be around again.
But today we heard the words.
Tomorrow—what will we do?
Where are we going to go?
How will be get there? Do we go anywhere—
or are we truly free right here as we stand?
Tonight there will be dancing.
Tomorrow the moss will drape from the trees again like a shawl.
Some folks will put in rafts on the river in the foggy morning,
poling their way upstream, as far north as they can.
Some of us are going to yoke up the mule,
and go back to the rows, the tobacco, the cotton, the hoe.
The dog will bark in the yard like he always has.
Today we heard the words.
Tonight there will be dancing.
Tomorrow the rooster will still not fly away.

Alan Birkelbach was the 2005 Texas State Poet Laureate.

On Writing

Peter Holland

I descend into my cell,
prisoner to my muse,
compelled to write,
compelled to tear my flesh,
expose my blood and my bones,
the very fiber of my nerves.
You say, what a cruel mistress;
but I love her, I love her so.

The Others

Jim LaVilla-Havelin
for Palmer Hall

we were no fraternity
of One A’s on our way
to the Boston Army Base
that April morning

I didn’t know the others—
but now I do—
names on Maya Lin’s scar
of names
poets with cancers from
Agent Orange
men my age with PTSD
before they even called it that,
shell-shocked

they could have called my altruistic bluff
to see if it went anywhere beyond
saving my own skin
and offered to let the others go
if I went in their stead
could have messed with my head

the others went in mine

would I have let them let them go
and gone?

“It Might Have Been”

Billy Jackson

Whittier called the saddest words
“it might have been,”
but I say not. Many poems
use that which never happened
to hatch unsad rewards.

Take “The Road Not Taken”
by Robert Frost,
or “At the Un-National Monument
along the Canadian Border”
by William Stafford,
or “Consolation”
and “Fishing on the Susquehanna in July”
by Billy Collins.

Taken alone, the words stand
naked on an empty stage,
waiting to be given costumes,
setting, and plot—not to mention us,
the eager audience.
in case you were wondering
Claire Stevens

the water is boiling now.
you left the hose on, in the parched garden, and
forgot to squish your cigarette out in the ash tray, or
turn the tv off.

the screen door swings open, in the wind
welcoming leaves to an empty hallway.
the phone dangles down, plastic yellow,
brushing the cool linoleum floor,
stretching the cracked white cord.

you didn’t stop the fan so
it drags the dust in lazy circles across
the glow of gauzy light that
crawls in through thin curtains
along a stained carpet.

but even if you could come home,
i don’t think you would remember to
turn the light off.

Divorce
Sherry Craven

The distance from the courthouse door
to my car seemed the same
as when we walked in 26 years ago,
but I knew it was not the same.

A jagged streak of light ran through the day
shifting the parking meter, the curb, the live oak tree
beside the building, ever so slightly to the left:
an earthquake creating geological fault
in my world, from now on.

I tilted my head right to compensate,
make things straight again,
but instead remembered failed love.

That night alone after dinner, putting up plates,
salt and pepper shakers, wiping off counters,

I looked out the window into the dark night
and exploded into the inky sky, shattering into a myth of stars,
pervading the dark with my pain,

a goddess who howled down to the earth
her longing to love and to be loved.

The next morning I toasted an English muffin
and peeled fruit for breakfast, and went to work, as always
yet now I carried the weight of all those stars with me
knowing the weight of them was mine always.

Secrets
Sally Clark

Secretly, I collect
the words he speaks to me,
hiding them away in small journals;
on random scraps of paper that
attract no attention;
masking them as shopping lists
tucked into forgotten pockets
of seldom worn raincoats;
hoarding them as savings against
the inevitable days of poverty
that lie ahead,
as certain as a changing sky.

Someday, when I am old,
struggling to get from one place
to the next without remembering,
I will reach into the pocket
of some mothly old jacket,
or open a dusty drawer in
some neglected room to find
the folded memory of his love;
the evidence of my treasuring;
and smiling that foolish smile that
old women sometimes do,
I will close my eyes and fill my heart
with the words
that no one else can hear but me.

Congress’ Lines
Hana Kapasi

Ants crawling on the floor,
while a gov-ern-ment apart,
a portly man from Texas
sputters into a microphone.

Slurred southern accent
mixes words like sugar
and butter creamed
in Mother’s cookie recipe.

The ants march
sharp, crisp, thin,
a fried potato chip
without the grease
perfectly salted.

Watching each other and not,
both continue
slurring and marching.
Editors’ Poems

Side-Effects
Jim Brandenburg & Debra Peña

This morning all dressed up
I leave eternity in my head
climb into my car
turn on the radio.
Beethoven’s sonata soothes my fears
over the hybrid’s quiet humming
The Tempest rides the waves
through horns and flashing lights
injecting me with a high

Upon dew dampened streets
I ride amidst the great
promise of yesterday
hope for tomorrow
forget to breathe crossing London’s bridge
feel the rise, note the fall of chest and road
just the other side of Ludwig’s adieu
grateful for the rescinded promises
of kept time and rhythm

A door opens to hallways
of moving flesh and frenzied voices
joining ten people in an elevator for eight
I ascend Bank of London’s heights
glasses, thin hair, blue suit and dark tie
stare at me in the mirror
startled at my own reflection
I am besieged my someone’s dearth of deodorant
life’s distractions in the daily drudge

Outside paneled glass, a wire sways
anchored to blue nothingness
beginning and end indiscernible from
the heights of a perched nest I call home
twelve hours daily caged without song
twinned to leather chair, ringing phone, and
nebulous musings of underlings unworthy
of my view from atop boxed dreams, soulless things
still I hum the tune of morning’s drive.

From dampened dreams and soulless things
the blue bubble of nothingness bursts
converging on the cleaning lady’s delight
in watering daily the flowering plants

This poem is an example of collaborative poetry.

Hill Country Rest Home
Carol Reposa

At the fort the flag flies all night long.
Inside the cold stone rooms
Are broken lanterns,
Gusts of wind, Comanche arrows
Memories of spurs and flint
Dingy photographs of Johnston, Thomas, Lee
Behind cracked glass.

From this rise a visitor sees everything:
The tired kaleidoscope
Of storefronts faced in river rock
Tile rooftops, stunted trees
And lines of slowly moving cars.

Beyond the hills
I hear the muffled roar
Of cannon, underbrush snapped
By rag-wrapped, bleeding feet
In quick retreat,
A tattered blanket
Thrown across the back
Dead dreams ripping at the brain.

Below are rusty pickups
Tidy hospitals
Retirement homes to house the ghosts
Of other wars,
While somewhere
Just before the morning medication
After all the doors are locked,
The General surrenders
To the yuccas and bluebonnets,
Scores of wrinkled soldiers
Hobbling on to Appomattox.

First published in Descant (TCU Press).

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik
James R. Adair

The buzzing of the cicadas stands in for the strings.
Crickets’ chirping sets the tempo.
Ratatat-tat goes the woodpecker, mimicking the snare.
Bobwhites provide the slide-whistle,
Mourning doves, the trilling of flutes.
The role of the tuba is played by bullfrogs.
Coyotes wail trumpet riffs.
Hoot owls are clarinets; screech owls, piccolos.
Mockingbirds fill in all the other parts, the show-offs!
At the front of the stage the sotol directs
As the wind blows its prickly leaves.
The cottontail hops into the clover, oblivious to the concert—
He’s heard this piece before!
Once I Was a Mountain
Joan Seifert

I woke past midnight, roused and stirred, inquiring, when most souls softly dream, their worlds complacent, but I—I longed to see Orion standing.

I looked across at rushing cascade currents and up I gazed at stars creating mysteries. Yes, Orion in his dominance was striding.

Then eager waters dashed persistent, downward, seized once-sturdy peaks from off the mountain. And I saw attrition wear away their meaning.

They were giant boulders first, then stones, then pebbles. It happened in one midnight’s flowing hour. (Evolve and strive, yet watch the stars outlasting!)

Then I remembered; once I was a mountain. It was past midnight, and a million novae reveled. Orion aimed; I tumbled toward the dawning.

Twelve Voices from One:
Poetic Responses to Art

Local poets write poems inspired by the art created by participants in the 2010 Art Cloth Mastery Program. This is the third and final installment in the series to be published in Voices de la Luna. See twelvevoicesfromone.blogspot.com for more information.

Hunting Owl
Lou Taylor
responding to the The Hunt, a beautifully dyed, hand-painted, and quilted piece by artist Leslie Rego

Eyes shining
In the night
Skimming the trees

Stalking prey
Wild beauty
Lovely and dangerous

A Love Story
Edna Kitchen
inspired by the art of Judy Carpenter, “Letters Home”

Our souls dangling by a single red thread
Of a chain that once held us together
Like a ghost struggling to find
Its way back home
Bursting forth through the sweet golden
Memories of your touch
Ceasing to exist in the thick blue torment
Of our lonely separateness
Your letters home are all I have
A whisper of a promise
That one day soon
You will return to me
To weave the threads of our lives once more
Into a greater destiny
Unraveling nevermore.
International Poems

No Disminuyas las Libertad de los Otros

Amado Nervo

Dichoso aquel que puede decir al fin de su existencia lo que el español Séneca dijo en sus altas máximas morales: “Saldré de la vida protestando que amé la buena conciencia y las buenas ocupaciones, y que NO DISMINUÍ LA LIBERTAD DE NADIE, y ninguno disminuyó la mía.”

Siendo tan relativa como lo es, tan condicionada por los hombres y los sucesos, la libertad constituye, sin embargo, el sumo bien de la tierra.

Schopenhauer afirmó que la Salud, la Juventud y la Libertad eran los tres bienes humanos por excelencia, pero la Salud muchos no la tienen; pasa la Juventud como la verdura del verano, y si la Libertad no nos resta cual postrera novia, nuestra indigencia moral es infinita.

Hay amigos de un egoísmo feroz: los llamados amigos íntimos, los que se dicen “afectuosos.” “¡Se está tan bien con usted!” exclaman, y os abruman con sus visitas, Jamás en su conciencia menguada se preguntaron si tú estás bien con ellos, y te esclavizan con las propias cadenas de tu cortesía, tu generosidad y tu paciencia.

Piensa, en cambio, tú, cuan preciosa es la libertad de los otros. Deja más bien a todos con deseos de verte de nuevo. Sean tus visitas parvas y tu cordialidad espaciosa. Ve donde te necesiten. No busques mucho las compañías que te diviertan, pensando que tú no las diviertes a ellas, y ten un sagrado respeto por el pobre y mermado bien que, al quitarnos la salud y la mocedad, nos dejan, compasivos, los dioses.

Salvador Díaz Mirón

Tu cuarteto es cuadriga de águilas bravas que aman las tempestades, los Oceanos; las pesadas tizonas, las férreas clavas, son las armas forjadas para tus manos.

Tu idea tiene cráteres y vierte lavas; del Arte, recorriendo montes y llanos, van tus rudas estrofas, jamás esclavas, como un tropel de búfalos americanos.

Lo que suena en tu lira lejos resuena, como cuando habla el bóreas, o cuando truena. ¡Hijo del Nuevo Mundo! la humanidad oiga, sobre la frente de las naciones, la hímnica pompa lírica de tus canciones que saluden triunfantes la Libertad.

Do Not Trivialize the Freedom of Others

Amado Nervo / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

Blessed be the one who can say, at the end of his existence, what the Spaniard, Séneca, said on his highest moral maxims: “I left life protesting that I loved good conscience and good occupations, and that I DID NOT TRIVIALIZE THE FREEDOM OF ANYONE, and no one diminished mine.”

“Being so relative as it is, so conditioned by men and events, freedom, nevertheless, is the greatest good on Earth.” Schopenhauer asserted that health, youth, and freedom were three human goods for excellence, but many lack health; youth passes like the summer vegetable, and if freedom leaves us, like a former lover, then our moral indignity will be infinite.

There are friends of a fierce selfishness: the so-called faithful friends, who claim to be “loving” individuals, who declare, “It is great to be with you!” and overwhelm you with their visits, never wondering, in their waning consciousness, if it is great for you to be with them, then they enslave you with chains made from your own courtesy, generosity, and patience. Instead, think of how precious the freedom of others is, and leave everyone with a desire to see you again.

Those visits will be bountiful and filled with generous cordiality. See where you are needed. Do not seek the company of those who entertain you, and who in turn think that you will not entertain them, and keep a sacred respect for the poor and diminished, for if the gods reclaimed our health and youth it would leave us empathetic.

Salvador Díaz Mirón

Rubén Darío / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

Your quartet is a quadrangle of brave eagles, embracing storms and oceans; heavy swords and iron stakes are the weapons forged for your hands.

But your mind is covered with craters and teeming lava; art, crossing mountains and plains, there are your rough strophes, never slaves, like a herd of American buffalo.

What rings from your lyre resonates, like when the north wind speaks, or when it thunders. Son of the new world! Humanity listens, over the brow of nations, elevating the lyrical hymn of your songs which salute triumphant freedom.
Roman Catholic Church Announces Two New Doctors of the Church, Fourth Woman

The Roman Catholic Church has announced two new doctors, or teachers, of the church: St. John of Ávila and St. Hildegard of Bingen. They are the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth individuals so recognized by the Catholic Church.

John, a sixteenth-century Spanish priest and mystic, was an associate of another doctor of the church, St. Teresa of Ávila. Together they worked to reform the church of Spain in the shadow of the Protestant Reformation that was spreading throughout Europe. In particular, they worked to reform the monastic orders in Spain, instituting stricter codes of conduct on both male and female religious.

Of the last five people declared to be doctors of the church, four of them have been women. Hildegard, a twelfth-century German abbess, mystic, and composer, joins Ss. Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Siena, and Thérèse of Lisieux—all named doctors since 1970. Hildegard’s music has been rediscovered in recent years, and recordings of several of her compositions are now available. In addition to musicologists, she has also attracted the recent interest of feminist scholars.

The Lasting Impact of the BP Oil Spill

Think the fact that the beaches are clean means that the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is no longer having an impact on the environment? Think again. A recent article in *PLoS One*, detailing the results of an extensive research project by scientists from the University of New Hampshire, Auburn University, and UTSA, documents the continuing impact of the oil spill on the ecology of the ocean floor.

In addition to affecting more familiar organisms like shrimp and oysters, the oil spill has devastated many other examples of marine life, including fungi and nematodes, also known as roundworms. Using DNA analysis, the scientists determined that of the more than seventy species of nematodes inhabiting the ocean floor before the spill, only six were still present in the spill’s aftermath.

The old adage says you can’t judge a book by its cover. According to this report, you also can’t judge the health of the ocean by its beaches. The complete report is at http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0038550; a summary for non-scientists can be found at http://utsa.edu/Sombrilla/fall2012/story/paseo-WhatLiesBeneath.html.
Select Poems

Negative Space
Richard Luftig

In Japanese art, the vital space around and between subjects.

He has learned
to live
his life off
center
not caring
to take
the risk,
like a ship
sailing
to the edge
of the sea,
or a Zen
painter who
reduces
his world
with each
unnecessary
stroke
until every
remembered
thing disappears.

A Glory of Cardinal Dawn
Jerry Craven

She brought gifts: yellow columbine,
grapes dark with seeds and those without green
in moist sugar, a brush of fingers feather
hushed in passion’s tactile rhyme,
perfume scented gold and tourmaline.
In slipping days her gifts came together
to shield us as might a canopy (a lime
shade of living leaf and tropic flowers
living only once in fleeting hours),
holding grains that leak from leaking time.

The horizon grays to pink Botswana agate
and fire of opals as nighthawks return
to fly like pointed shadows in magnolia
shade and above red oak, above
slash pine, sweetgum—all
Big Thicket trees where we with beauty
shall sleep in the freedom of each new night,
awake in a glory of cardinal dawn, walk
beneath the winged sky where everyone
must leave behind all bent and broken past
hours (tar painted, deadly dark),
where we shall whisper new commands that each
painful past grain of Time’s lies
must go forever from our emancipation
into fields of diamond dew by day
and safe silver riding in nighttime skies.

Scribbling Cure
Robert Bonazzi

For Picasso and Braque,
who reinvented space in no time flat

What’s so automatic about writing
“I ask you, André Breton”
Did you trip an electric eye
or ring a mystic bell?

Joyce turned his inner ear to
fresh registers in the sirens’ song
“Sweet bad luck on the waves washed our island,”
he hailed above the roar of Beckett’s silence.
Ireland their island, Paris their cold exile,
the perfect pun their cunning best.
Was Donne’s lyric as deaf
as Hemingway’s terse echo?
We remain islands, separate pages, solitary cells.

Projecting back upon our primal cave,
illuminated now by drawn-out terrors,
we quest this night the Other to stalk.
Eternally expounding our mortal law,
we worship a wound that never heals.
Yet was not the Master, as every
novice or slave, Mother-born?
Same Old Same Old
Clyta Coder

*The gingham dog and the calico cat*
side by side on the table sat.
*T’was half past twelve and (what do you think!)
Neither one nor t’other had slept a wink.*

Eugene Field

*The gingham dog and the calico cat*
stuffed with fluff and empty words
flop about like dodo birds.
They promise a land of milk and honey,
smile and count their campaign money.

*side by side on the table sat*
till sliding off on their ifs, ands or buts
they promise jobs and big tax cuts,
to balance the budget, reduce the debt,
cut government spending and better yet,

*T’was half-past twelve and (what do you think!)
I think it’s time to be specific.
A detailed plan would be terrific.
Voter patience is wearing thin;
platitudes should never win.

Nor one nor t’other had slept a wink
bleary eyed after years of B.S.ing
to be so close is quite distressing.
Whom to choose? Some still don’t know.
Eeny, meeny or miny, moe.

The Death of Lincoln
William Cullen Bryant

Oh, slow to smite and swift to spare,
Gentle and merciful and just!
Who, in the fear of God, didst bear
The sword of power, a nation’s trust!

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,
Amid the awe that hushes all,
And speak the anguish of a land
That shook with horror at thy fall.

Thy task is done; the bond are free:
We bear thee to an honored grave,
Whose proudest monument shall be
The broken fetters of the slave.

Pure was thy life; its bloody close
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,
Among the noble host of those
Who perished in the cause of Right.

Tiburon
Marian Huddud
in response to Mark Becker’s painting, *Tiburon*

The way a zoom lens would capture
in focus—the one rose, or tulip
at the center of the photographer’s eye,
the one first seen, and all that light,

that golden light, flooding in from
the unseen window—one flower bowing
its head, slightly, or leaning—out of
the wild bunch of yellow stock

or larkspur, important, in their framing
—lines not quite made out yet—all we know

is this bed of seeing—golden light holding
firm behind—and framing—this little sister

on fire—and all of them surrounding,
wanting her to be—seen—and saying

we will blur ourselves out into light

Tiburon
Mark Becker
Holy Landers
Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

Listen!
You are fighting over a land that can fit,
with wilderness to spare,
in the Panhandle of Texas.

You are building walls to segregate,
splitting wholes till little is left,
killing and dying for pieces of sky
in the same window.

The olive trees are dying
of embarrassment.
They have enough fruits
and pits for all of you.
All they want is for you to stop
uprooting them.
Sending your children to die
in their names.

Listen!
Your land is no holier than my backyard.
None of you is any more chosen
than the homeless veteran panhandling
with a God Bless cardboard sign
at the light of Mecca
and San Pedro.

Draw a borderline around the place.
Call it home for all the living,
all the dead,
all the tired exiles with its dust
gummed on their tongues.

There are no heroes left.


Juneteenth: An Emancipation Celebration

On June 18, 1865, General Gordon Granger of the U.S. Union Army landed at Galveston, Texas, with two thousand federal troops. The following day, June 19, Granger stood on the balcony of Ashton Villa, one of the first brick homes in Texas (and, ironically but not surprisingly, built with slave labor), and proclaimed in the name of President Andrew Johnson that all slaves in Texas were free. Although Lincoln had proclaimed the Emancipation Proclamation two and a half years earlier, the proclamation had had no impact on slaves in the state. In fact, on the very day of Lincoln’s proclamation, Jan 1, 1863, Confederate General John B. Magruder expelled Union troops from Galveston in the Second Battle of Galveston, one of the few battles fought in the state (the final battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Palmito Ranch, was fought in Texas and won by the Confederacy on May 12-13, 1865, after the war had officially ended but before word had reached the troops on either side).

Granger’s announcement led former slaves to party exuberantly in the streets of Galveston, and the celebrations quickly spread to other cities. Starting the following year, African Americans throughout Texas commemorated June 19th, which quickly became known by the portmanteau “Juneteenth,” with picnics, parties, and parades. The celebration of Juneteenth spread to other southern states, and eventually to states outside the Old South. Today Juneteenth is recognized as an official state holiday or state observance by forty-one states and the District of Columbia.

Shakespeare in 140 Characters or Less

Excerpts from “To Tweet Or Not to Tweet? Shakespeare Plays Retold, Twitter-Style” by Amy Helmes and Kim Askew, published in The Huffington Post, Dec 17, 2012

Hamlet:
Murdered ghost dad convinces Morrissey-type to stage play & bust widow mom for hooking up w/uncle. Everyone dies, including #emogirlfriend.

Macbeth:
Whipped by wife, Scottish dude starts killing spree after getting too stoked about psychic reading by 3 witches. #beingkingisoverrated

Romeo and Juliet:
Rebound relationship + family feud + busybody priest + chemically-induced slumber = tragedy. #blameRosaline

Taming of the Shrew:
Wanted: Fortune-seeking SWM with #nervesofsteel to woo and wed “temperamental” older sister so younger one can tie the knot.
Elegies by Palmer Hall
from www.facebook.com/hpalmerh

Palmer Hall, editor of Pecan Grove Press and director of the Louis J. Blume Academic Library at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, is currently undergoing treatment for cancer. An accomplished writer, editor, and poet, Hall decided to record some of his experiences and thoughts in a series of elegies published on his Facebook page. The selections here are published with his permission.

Elegy 5
16 July 2012

We have so many names for it: the last furlong,
Headed west, the sun setting, the end of the road.
It is not frightening, only unknown….unknown
And yet so many others have managed to do it.

If they’ve done it, so can we. No? No fear!
That’s what the bumper sticker says. No, not
At all. Outside the gate, the perpetual war
Between machines and animals, road kill.

A deer lifts her head, eyes fluttering, pleading,
But I have no gun, no knife, have no easy way
To help her make her end. I call the fire department
Down the road and they come. Not exactly a rescue
But a worthwhile act. I could, I suppose, have
Run over her again, but I drive a Miata and thought
I would cause more pain instead of easing her away.
No moral complexity, no almost born fawn, just
A doe, in pain, collision with a car on a late Monday
Evening in July. Once below a time, I killed a man
Though I did not see him, knew him only from his
Radio messages. I am Bao, he said, and he reported
To someone somewhere. I read his messages, located
Him by triangulation. Napalm and shit happen. Death
Happens on a triple-covered mountain in the jungles,
On a paved road outside a suburban development.

Elegy 6
18 July 2012

Surrounded by books—books on his war—poetry books
Print crammed into every nook, he sat and waited for
Whatever might come, might stay away, need clearing away.

The storms this time brought rain, hard and fast, dust
Beaten down before it could rise. Tom Joad drove the truck west
Into the dwindling daylight, worked at rough labor, picking.

My father did the same, after his war, arc welding, seaming
Boilers, living from payday to payday. It’s an old story all
Drifting from somewhere to somewhere, to some ending.

We cannot foresee. I saw a lizard yesterday, in the persimmon
Tree outside my window, lusting for a female when SNAP!
The object of his intention met death in the beak of a brilliant bird.

Books are safer. You step outside and stuff happens; open a book.

Elegy 7
19 July 2012

My own Pacific crossing was mild, nothing arresting
Until we approached Subic Bay. I lost my contacts
In the middle of so much ocean. Some shark
is probably wearing them still. We lost one soldier
who jumped overboard, were pinned in concertina wire
on the beaches of Subic Bay, then churned on to Da Nang
and south to Chu Lai. Chu Lai to Nha Trang, Nha Trang
to Pleiku and the Central Highlands: KonTum, Dak To.

Forty-five years ago, the years compressed like poetry,
The past, the present—all one, all demanding attention.
Where to start and where to end? What side roads
To stray and explore? It is all one, nothing spins off.

A young girl sitting on a water buffalo stares vacantly at us,
Almost nods. Her father pushes the plow into rice paddies.

Elegy 8
21 July 2012

A young woman marching with me against a stupid war,
Her hand in mine.
Two years later, I drive from Austin
Across Arkansas and Tennessee, along the Blue Ridge Skyline,
A million fireflies explode from Shenandoah
A billion stars from above, a light show outdoing
Love Cry Want with the Woodstock light show.
And still, I
Almost fall asleep, drift towards the cliff, the driver
Of a semi pulls close behind me, sounds his air horn, blinks
His brights, wakes me to the necessity for three cups of hot
Coffee at the next truck stop.
I drive around the beltway, exit to Silver Spring.
She’s at work, but my key fits
And I crash until nine that night.
She wakes me, tells me to rest
I’ll leave tomorrow.
No justice, just too good, no screams,
No regrets, just a much too soft goodbye.
I drive home.
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.

We Never Have the Whole Story

Jane D. Dare

My visiting aunt asked what happened. I shrugged and she sighed: They used to run to each other, hug so tightly that no light could pierce their seams! My parents’ marriage appeared irrevocably pathetic, especially after 57 years. Every evening, mom’s voice rose in pitch and punch while dad’s back-against-the-wall faded beige into it; his disappearance activated every trigger she had: vinyl records were thrown Frisbee-style lethal. Cherry-brown and palomino-colored oil paintings of early New Mexican landscapes, along with hand-carved teak tables cracked beneath her hurls of indignation. Silently, I’d mince through chips lying like scabs of dried blood to my early morning breakfasts. Years later, dad is dead. Mom’s anger has wound into a deep black knot, hard and sharp like obsidian. The brutal physical force of the growth overwhelmed her ancient emotional rage and she strained against death to whisper, from a faraway place induced by life-support systems, of nightmarish ancient emotional rage and she strained against death to whisper, of dried blood to my early morning breakfasts. Years later, dad is dead. Mom’s anger has wound into a deep black knot, hard and sharp like obsidian. The brutal physical force of the growth overwhelmed her ancient emotional rage and she strained against death to whisper, from a faraway place induced by life-support systems, of nightmarish ancient emotional rage and she strained against death to whisper, of dried blood to my early morning breakfasts. Years later, dad is dead. Mom’s anger has wound into a deep black knot, hard and sharp like obsidian. 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had roughly ten years of experience trying to rein in my own mind. None of us start off well-prepared, and I was no different. When I was first diagnosed, I let the disorder take over. I did nothing to truly control it. I didn’t want to do the work. I didn’t ask for the disorder, and I wasn’t going to attempt to find a middle ground—a way of living with it. Because I did not work at my disease, it affected my social life, employment, and education. I was a poor friend, a poor employee, and a poor student. In my first year of college, I was institutionalized for a short time, but I quickly lied my way out of the hospital, and my life continued to spiral through highs and lows for many years. However, it was a move, away from Texas, that allowed me—inspired me—to start anew.

I found myself in Ohio for two years. At this point, I had garnered some insight and control, but I was still fairly aimless. And it was during this time that I attempted to live medication-free. As I write this, four years later, I am still currently un-medicated. Am I not recommending it for anyone, nor am I saying that I am cured. I am aware that someday I might need the medication again, but right now, I am attempting things on my own with the skills I’ve learned over the years. Every day is still a struggle. My wife, my family, and my friends are my foundation, but the most important part of my system of control is my own sense of purpose.

While I was living in Ohio, I accepted a job in the special needs community as an in-homecare provider and later took those skills back to Texas. Since that time I’ve held several positions related to the special needs community here in Texas. Right now, I’m working as a special education assistant at a local middle school and am working toward my teacher certification. Finding my purpose was the final push I needed to truly attempt to get control of my condition and my life. I had something bigger than myself to worry about. Every day I am reminded that those kids need me, and in that respect, I am truly grateful and profoundly lucky.

I hope that everyone else who shares my diagnosis experiences as much success as I personally have had. I cannot stress enough how lucky I am to have had everything turn out the way it has. But besides luck, I have my system. I work on it every day. It is an ongoing process.

The Wounded Vet
Brandon Chase Bailey
A Short Story

With no place to call home except the streets of Austin, Texas, Jim Sanders sat in his old, battered wheelchair and thought about the circumstances that had brought him to this sorry condition. At the time, Jim thought joining the Marines was a great idea. He thought about how much he would learn and do and all the great countries he would visit. He didn’t stop to think about war or having to kill other human beings, sending them out into eternity.

On his first tour of duty, he was sent to the front line in Cambodia, fighting guerrillas and raiding villages. Jim saw horrible things in combat that kept him from sleeping at night. He would wake up in the middle of the night with cold sweats and shakes, so he began to experiment with drugs to numb the pain of war. Jim became a regular user of marijuana, then methamphetamines and other addictive drugs. Jim especially liked and craved methamphetamines, or speed, as it was commonly called. He would do three or four lines of speed before every mission and kept a supply with him everywhere he went in case he needed a bump. This drug helped him stay awake for days on end so he could be attentive for the mission. Any time he was coming down or started to feel drowsy, he pulled out his stash and did a couple of lines, which perked him up immediately.

What started as a practical way to stay alert for missions turned into a raging addiction. Jim could not function without his beloved speed. If he didn’t have it, he became moody and withdrawn and thought constantly about how he could get his drugs. Jim began to show signs of drug abuse. He talked about drugs all the time, and he had needle tracks up and down both arms. His teeth began to rot and hurt. If he could not get his drugs, he suffered symptoms of withdrawal. Jim’s fellow soldiers recognized these symptoms and tried to talk to him about them, but he refused to listen. In his mind there was no problem; he was not addicted to drugs, he just liked them a whole lot.

Jim was nearing the end of his tour and began making plans to move back into his parents’ home, where he had lived most of his life. When he finally got home, his parents noticed how pale and thin he was, and they were worried about him. They tried to talk to him, but he would only reply with a grunt. Jim had to make some connection, and quick. He was already showing signs of withdrawal.

Jim set out through the streets of Austin looking for dealers. He found a guy named Rudy who had just what Jim wanted. Jim didn’t have enough money to make the deal, but he had an idea. He remembered his mother kept several pieces of valuable heirloom jewelry in a satin pouch in a bedroom chest of drawers. Jim invited Rudy to his house to make the deal. The only problem was that Jim’s parents were home. He was able to dodge them, and took Rudy to his bedroom. Then, while his mother was in the kitchen preparing dinner, Jim slipped quickly into her bedroom, grabbed the satin pouch, and hurried to his room.

While Jim and Rudy were in Jim’s room making the deal, his mom walked in to announce dinner. Everyone froze, just staring at each other and the drugs and jewelry spread out on the bed between the two men. Jim’s parents kicked him out of their home that night and told him not to come back or call them ever again. Jim stayed with Rudy that night, but the next day Rudy made him leave. Rudy said he could not stay and sponge off him, since they only knew each other from the drug deal the night before.

Jim used a payphone to call everyone he knew trying to find a place to stay. He finally reached a high school buddy named Bill who agreed to let him stay with him until he could get back on his feet. But Jim did not pull his weight around the apartment. He threw all-night parties that had to be broken up by the police. It wasn’t long before Bill was fed up with Jim, but he allowed him to stay until he found out Jim was stealing money from his wallet to maintain his addiction. He kicked Jim out, and this time there was absolutely nobody to help him or give him a place to stay.

That night he slept on a bus bench for the first time. Jim tried to call his parents, but they refused to talk to him. Jim realized he had become nothing but a drug-addicted street bum—a far cry from the proud Marine he had been a few years ago.
The gatewheel will not hold
caoked in rare mud after one rain
bumbled over too many stones
sprottling on the side of the wheel, not
a good way to roll

the gatewheel in a pebble dance
all askew, will fly apart and I’ll be stuck
inside or outside, unable to move it
a calamity in scrub grass and mesquite

havoc and spot welding, replacement
from the farm supply store, or
standing in the full moon as the scrawny coyote
lopes by, knowing — this is what the Mayan calendar
meant

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Prophecy
Jim LaVilla-Havelin

Dream: The dream takes place in an unknown area close to downtown. It is dark, and I am finding my way to Rick. I go straight from downtown for about 15 minutes. Then I take a right for a couple of blocks, a left for a couple of blocks and another left. There is an old house on the left. It is the second house on the left. I go inside. There is an older male (unknown) living in the house. He invites me in. The lights have low wattage, just like Rick used to have when he was alive and had his apartment. The man leads me to the back where Rick greets me. Rick has decorated the room he appears to be living in. It is very colorful, with furniture from different periods. The walls are decorated with paintings. Rick is happy to see me, and we embrace. Rick looks a bit older than when he died, suggesting his current age, were he alive today. He is living here temporarily. We speak about my life and Maria’s and what we are doing in the garden and house. Rick seems pleased with what I tell him. I invite him to come by the house, but I don’t have transportation at the moment; I am walking. We agree to meet later and go by the house. I am anxious for Rick to see our house. We embrace, and I go to the front of the house and leave. It seems as though I have walked through a maze to get here, and I am wondering how I will find my way back. I realize that I must trust in my instincts, and I know the first couple of turns are to my right. It is very dark, and the lights are dim. I search for my way back. End of dream.

Interpretation: Rick died suddenly a year ago August of a heart attack. I had known Rick for 20 years. I was his payee, his therapist and his emotional support. Rick had shamanistic qualities and was able to share his insights with many people. Many friends drew from his insights and came to him with their problems. Rick, a problem solver, was well read and had great people skills and great critical thinking skills. He knew gardening, especially flowers, he knew how to decorate a house, he had a taste for fashion, he knew about cooking, and he understood relationships. He knew about people on the streets and what problems they faced. He spoke English and Spanish equally well. He helped me with my plants and flowers and helped Maria and me decorate our house. I could speak to him on any topic and receive a thoughtful answer. On a more subjective level Rick represents a positive shadow. His qualities I am integrating into my life. Since he died, I have learned more about gardening and more about decorating our house. Rick taught me about plants and flowers, and I was able to understand the process on my own before he died. He wanted me to become more independent. I miss his sense of humor and his insights. I was his therapist, but he was also my therapist. As a result of knowing Rick, I have become a better therapist. This dream is about the Self. I leave the downtown, representing the center of Self. I travel into the unconscious, where I meet Rick. We are still connected, because he has become part of the Self. There is a numinous quality about Rick, and I felt invigorated after having this dream. I felt that numinous quality in myself. Another possible interpretation of this dream is that he and I actually met. I don’t rule out that possibility. I had a sense that our meeting was real. Can people actually appear in dreams, or are people in dreams our projections? I choose to leave that question open.
**Art Therapy**

**What Does an Art Therapist Do?**
*Excerpt from a letter by Maripat Munley*

You asked me to give you some idea of how much time I spend at the County Jail through the Bexar County Detention Ministries. We offer from three to four six-week cycles of visual spiritual journaling, art as prayer on Tuesday afternoons. Each cycle is about 18 hours plus prep time and administrative time at least one or two days per cycle (approximately 110-120 hours total). In addition I often work individually with inmates perhaps 20 hours a year. At Haven for Hope we offer one four-hour workshop four times per year plus prep and administrative time and time to train our six to eight facilitators (12 hours). Total at H4H is about 64 hours per year. I hope that helps.

..................................................................................
It has meant a great deal to all these people both to submit and to be published.

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Blessings on all your hard work and the contribution it makes to our community.

**A Pebble among Millions**  
*Tracy Brown*

Some things are hidden from us like a road shaded beneath a canopy of trees.  
Little breaths of light seep through to our consciousness.  
Little tendrils of moss hang free or wrap around our minds like thoughts.  
How beautiful are the unexpected things when we find them, when our minds journey beneath the layers of branches and leaves, when we ask God to reveal truths too difficult for us to see.  
Like the value of a pebble among millions, or the constant renewal of life, or the impressions we make on others without doing a single thing but living.

**Every Day**  
*Earl Salazar*

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

**Beneath**  
*Celeste Delarosa*

Scratching beneath the surface their finest one gem is shining in the sand so sparkly and beautiful to me you would have never known it’s been scratched once or twice because it’s the prettiest one of all.  
It feels so lonely even though there are a lot of other gems around it.  
This is nothing new to it as it gets swept up by the water.  
Waves passing over and over lead the rhinestone to be in a beautiful place where the gem can finally shine in its own scene in your arms.

**I’m Here … Always**  
*Frances R. Ford*

How do I talk to her? How do I tell her I’m not far?  
How do I tell her she’s never alone when all she knows is despair?  
How do I give her hope when she’d rather be hanging from a rope?  
How do I tell her this too shall pass when she can’t see anything past her sadness?  
Failures … Hurts … Too much to bear …  
How do I show her she won’t always be there?  
Will she listen? Will she try?  
Either way I’ll never leave her side  
She needs me.  
She longs for me but doesn’t know how to reach me.  
How do I tell her she’s worth my time?  
By kissing her with a breath of air, touching her with a new day and holding her every step of the rest of her days.  
I’ll always care. I’ll always be there.  
Just waiting for her to finally reach out to me … and leave it all in my hands completely.  
Love, God.

**San Antonio Small Presses**  
*Word Design Studio*

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 books from Word Design Studio are Shelia Darst, *A Poet’s Palette*, and Loretta Burns Vaughan, *What Angels Bless*. For more information, please visit www.worddesignstudio.com.
Music and Poetry

In the Green Alley
In Memory of Tom Williams

Music by Daniel Parker
Poem by Mo H Saidi

http://youtu.be/x_Noh3NiTIw

With the sudden and unexpected death of our good friend, Tom Williams, we both found ourselves in deep grief. Realizing we have lost a very dear and charming friend, thinking about him and his bereaved family, we created this music and poetry piece, http://youtu.be/x_Noh3NiTIw, in his memory.

Tom Williams was born in Belfast, Ireland, but spent most of his adult life in the U.S. working in American space programs. He was an avid golfer and had a kind word and approving smile for everyone he met.

In the Green Alley
for June Williams

Some men depart too soon
when they are at their peak
when they raise a goblet—
for life they salute—before
they sail the cerulean sea
before they begin the last mile.

Some men are the core
the crux of the team
the warm vein of life
the blades of grass in summer
the gentle showers of autumn
the glorious flames of winter
and the lilacs in spring.

Some men depart too soon
as the shore awaits their climb
the ears yet crave their words
the loved ones knock on the door.

Before the lights dim
before the bells toll
from the green alley
some men depart too soon.

Where Is the Syrian Revolution Going?

Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

With people dying by the hundreds every day in Syria, and with tanks, missiles and combat aircraft used to destroy whole neighborhoods in just about every city and town, the country is unmistakeably at war, a war between a dictatorial regime’s military might and people who could no longer live with oppression and humiliation.

I fault the regime fully and completely for deliberately and brutally dragging the country into this bloodbath. It certainly had ample opportunities before—and for weeks after—the first bullet was fired at a protester to pursue a path of dialogue and conciliation.

Along with acts of bravery and heroism on the part of the people, fighting one of the most brutal regimes in existence today and one of the largest militaries in the region, images of abuse and of inhumanity toward the “enemies” are now coming to us from both sides of the fight (with the regime claiming the lion’s share of atrocities). Individual and group acts of revenge and vigilante justice are taking place and are displayed daily for all to see on YouTube, Facebook, and other media outlets.

War is never pretty, and there is nothing “civil” about it. It represents our failure, as human beings, to find ways to settle our differences peacefully. It can bring out the best, along with the worst, in any people.

It is important to keep in mind that the Syrian Revolution started in March 2011 as a peaceful movement for change, a change to freedom and democracy in a country that has known neither for many decades. For months after that the people tried to maintain that posture, while the regime continued to kill peaceful demonstrators in cold blood week after week. Defections in the regime’s ranks, soldiers and officers who refused to kill their own people, started the calls for armed resistance as a form of legitimate self-defense. The Free Syrian Army was born as a result. It now includes civilian volunteers in its ranks, and its brigades are found across the country.

Any number of scenarios may unfold in the coming weeks (or months!). They include a sudden collapse of the regime, a coup d’état by remaining “loyal” troops, a foreign intervention that could take the form of a no-fly-zone and/or the creation of safe zones, the widening of the conflict into a larger regional war, or a bloody stalemate that drags on indefinitely. Obviously, for the sake of all Syrians, especially the civilians who are paying the dearest price for escalating violence, the sooner this war is over the better.

Today we are a long way from those “innocent” early days of the “Arab Spring,” but I do hope that when the battle for Syria is over (and the regime is gone), that those early days are not forgotten.

The peaceful Syrian people demonstrated and sacrificed for the right to live in freedom, dignity and peace. I hope that the beauty and purity of those aspirations will survive and triumph over the chaos and madness of war and its aftermath.
The Impact of the Gettysburg Address
Adapted from The American Civil War, Writer’s Almanac and Wikipedia

Although a large number of historical and biographical narratives have been written regarding the American Civil War, one of the significant failures of the American literary imagination has been its inability to create a major poem, novel, or play regarding this most transformative crisis in the country’s history. Apart from Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” only a handful of literary masterpieces such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Gone with the Wind, The Red Badge of Courage, and Toni Morrison’s Beloved deal with that war.

President Lincoln arrived at Gettysburg about 10 AM on a foggy, cold morning. Around noon, the sun came out as the crowds gathered on a hill overlooking the battlefield. A military band played, a local preacher offered a long prayer, and the headlining orator, Edward Everett, spoke for more than two hours, a normal length for a speech at the time. He described the Battle of Gettysburg in great detail and brought the audience to tears more than once.

When Everett was finished, Lincoln got up and pulled his speech from his coat pocket. It consisted of ten sentences, a total of 272 words. Lincoln did not mention any of the specifics of the war or any of the details of the battle of Gettysburg. He did not mention the North or the South. He did not mention slavery. Instead, he explained, in ordinary language, that our nation was founded on the idea that all men are created equal, and that we must continue to fight for that principle, in honor of those who died fighting for it.

Unfortunately for Lincoln, the audience was distracted by a photographer setting up his camera, and by the time Lincoln had finished his speech and sat down, the audience didn’t even realize he had spoken. Lincoln was disappointed in his performance, but the next day Edward Everett told the president, “I wish that I could flatter myself that I had come as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes.” The speech was reprinted in newspapers around the country, and it went on to become one of the most important speeches in American history.

Gettysburg Address
Abraham Lincoln
Delivered Nov 19, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly

Blue Vengeance
by Ira Cates
A San Antonio Homicide Sergeant publishes his second Crime Story

If you like police stories, Ira Cates’ second novel Blue Vengeance is a trip worth taking. Blue Vengeance is the story of a veteran police officer on the cusp of retirement whose family is murdered during a botched robbery. A grieving and angry victim frustrated with an often unjust justice system, Sgt. Miller takes matters into his own hands and administers his own brand of justice. To read more about this story, please visit www.voicesdelaluna.com or http://tower.com/book-publisher/booklocker-com-inc. To purchase, visit www.booklocker.com.

Arathi: School of Indian Dance
by Rajam Ramamurthy

An illustrated book, Arathi: School of Indian Dance, edited by Rajam Ramamurthy, MD, who is a physician-writer-dancer, describes the spiritual meaning of “Bharathanatyam” an ancient classical dance form. A distinguished professor of pediatrics at UT Health Science Center, she considers dance as an essential part of her life. She writes in the preface, “Simply saying, I dance would be an understatement of my life the past 30 years.” The photo shows Ramamurthy with her former students Rajagopal and Thankavel, receiving the lifetime achievement award for her service to dance.

Ramamurthy works and teaches at the medical school and also teaches dance. She still dances and says that she is exalted by the sheer movement of her body. In collaboration with a group of dedicated Indian-American women who are highly educated and carry important professional duties, the Arathi School of Indian Dance was founded in 1981, the first such school in south Texas.

The book describes the philosophical aspects of dance. In illustrating the history of the school through pictures and narration, the book chronicles the evolution of this art form not only locally but also in the diaspora in the U.S. The pictures are in vivid colors as men and women are shown in dance costumes in remarkable harmony and beauty. For more information visit www.voicesdelaluna.com or peruse the book, which is available through the Amazon.com.
Dining with Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)
Sevilla Restaurant

Born near Granada in Fuente Vaqueros, Spain, to a prosperous farm owner and a pianist, prominent 20th-century Spanish poet and dramatist Federico García Lorca studied law at Sacred Heart University before relocating to Madrid in 1919 to focus on his writing. In Madrid he joined a group of avant-garde artists that included Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel. The group, collectively known as the “Generation of ’27,” introduced Lorca to Surrealism, a movement that would greatly influence his writing.

Lorca published numerous volumes of poetry during his career, beginning with Impresiones y Viajes (1919). His lyrical work often incorporates elements of Spanish folklore, Andalusian flamenco and Gypsy culture, and cante jondo, or deep songs, while exploring themes of romantic love and tragedy.

Lorca’s favorite restaurant in Granada was Sevilla Restaurant, which is situated next to the cathedral. It specializes in the traditional food of Granada and Andalucía. Since it opened in 1930, the excellent traditional food and the magnificent setting of the terrace which is next to the cathedral have attracted many distinguished visitors from Spain and all over the world, including Marlon Brando, Picasso, and Dali.

Essays

From Afar
Debra Peña

Toledo, Spain: June 24, 2011

Today finds me a bit “off”—don’t know that I would call it homesick. Spain is everything I imagined and more but I ache to see my son who has just arrived in Texas for his pre-deployment visit. That my son is being sent to Afghanistan weighs on me—heavy—somber as the deep tones of ancient cathedral bells riding the air of this early Spanish morn. I’ve known for quite some time that he would be sent, known that this is something he chose for his life path (at least for now), but that knowledge does little to soothe my mother-heart—that part of me connected to him from the very first moment of his life, the invisible pulse that nurtured his body and aided in his safe arrival to this plane—it is this very pulse, the invisible nurturer that overwhelms me this morning. I ache for his scent, the smell of warm earth, rich soil and lush foliage. Always, my son has reminded me of deep forests, complexly beautiful! And today, back in Poth, Texas, I know he is walking in my house, his home, and I long to be there.

Honestly, I think that being the mother of an adult child is far more difficult than the mothering required during the growing years because the intense love does not dissipate. On the contrary, it actually continues to grow. What does change is the role of the mother. No longer is she able to band-aid the multiple boo-boos inflicted or suffered, or assert her will. Instead, she must step aside, trust that she has well-equipped her “baby” for the world outside of home, and let her precious child go. It is, by far, one of the most difficult lessons/processes I’ve had to endure/learn. Instinct compels me to save each of my boys—“Defend” cries the protector within. All the while knowing that I cannot.

How do I still the warrior mother within me?

The telephone conversations we’ve had leading up to his deployment have been horribly painful—frightening. Burial arrangements; my son solemnly explaining that he wants to be buried in his uniform with a family picture next to his heart, a Bud Light by his side, and his motorcycle keys behind his white-gloved hands, the particular songs to play at his gravesite. Jesus, God, how am I supposed to tell the mom in me that all is going to be okay when I have to listen to my baby—my man-child—tell me how he wants to be buried? Me in this world without my child is unimaginable.

Conversations about his will, power of attorney, burial arrangements, military benefits, and what he wishes to be given to each family member should the unthinkable occur (conversations more painful than my steady, strong, mother voice eluded) have drained me, left me vulnerable. How am I to go home, spend four days with my son, embrace him, and know that for eight months I cannot reach him? How do I stand strong, choke back my fear, my pain, and release him to the mess of Afghanistan without tears? Can I be that strong? I think I can—I have to for my son, right? But, what afterward? What comforter do I wrap myself in as I watch his strong, lean back move further from me?

I’ve given both Ryan and Timothy what is required to stand strong (or what I know of it), to make decisions, and for the most part, both of my sons have equipped themselves well for their respective journeys. And I KNOW that they are strong, smart men, who will, like the rest of us, be forged by the heat of life ultimately revealing the true wonder of their individual spirits. But this morning, all of this knowing means nothing to my momma heart. I simply miss my son, and am so afraid. My job? Like all of the other strong, frightened, concerned mothers of grown men walking the treacherous path of life, I will support him, sequester my fear, and step aside—just not too far.
At the South I was a member of the Methodist Church. When I came north, I thought one Sunday I would attend communion, at one of the churches of my denomination, in the town I was staying. The white people gathered round the altar, the blacks clustered by the door. After the good minister had served out the bread and wine to one portion of those near him, he said, “These may withdraw, and others come forward;” thus he proceeded till all the white members had been served. Then he took a long breath, and looking out towards the door, exclaimed, “Come up, colored friends, come up! for you know God is no respecter of persons!” I haven’t been there to see the sacraments taken since.

At New Bedford, where I live, there was a great revival of religion not long ago—many were converted and “received” as they said, “into the kingdom of heaven.” But it seems, the kingdom of heaven is like a net; at least so it was according to the practice of these pious Christians; and when the net was drawn ashore, they had to set down and cull out the fish. Well, it happened now that some of the fish had rather black scales; so these were sorted out and packed by themselves. But among those who experienced religion at this time was a colored girl; she was baptized in the same water as the rest; so she thought she might sit at the Lord’s table and partake of the same sacramental elements with the others. The deacon handed round the cup, and when he came to the black girl, he could not pass her, for there was the minister looking right at him, and as he was a kind of abolitionist, the deacon was rather afraid of giving him offense; so he handed the girl the cup, and she tasted. Now it so happened that next to her sat a young lady who had been converted at the same time, baptized in the same water, and put her trust in the same blessed Saviour; yet when the cup containing the precious blood which had been shed for all, came to her, she rose in disdain, and walked out of the church. Such was the religion she had experienced!

Another young lady fell into a trance. When she awoke, she declared she had been to heaven. Her friends were all anxious to know what and whom she had seen there; so she told the whole story. But there was one good old lady whose curiosity went beyond that of all the others—and she inquired of the girl that had the vision, if she saw any black folks in heaven? After some hesitation, the reply was, “Oh! I didn’t go into the kitchen!”

Thus you see, my hearers, this prejudice goes even into the church of God. And there are those who carry it so far that it is disagreeable to them even to think of going to heaven, if colored people are going there too. And whence comes it? The grand cause is slavery; but there are others less prominent; one of them is the way in which children in this part of the country are instructed to regard the blacks.

“Yes!” exclaimed an old gentleman, interrupting him—“when they behave wrong, they are told, ‘black man come catch you.’”

Yet people in general will say they like colored men as well as any other, but in their proper place! They assign us that place; they don’t let us do it for ourselves, nor will they allow us a voice in the decision. They will not allow that we have a head to think, and a heart to feel, and a soul to aspire. They treat us not as men, but as dogs—they cry “Stu-boy!” and expect us to run and do their bidding. That’s the way we are liked. You degrade us, and then ask why we are degraded—you shut our mouths, and then ask why we don’t speak—you close our colleges and seminaries against us, and then ask why we don’t know more.

But all this prejudice sinks into insignificance in my mind, when compared with the enormous iniquity of the system which is its cause—the system that sold my four sisters and my brothers into bondage—and which calls in its priests to defend it even from the Bible! The slaveholding ministers preach up the divine right of the slaveholders to property in their fellow-men. The southern preachers say to the poor slave, “Oh! if you wish to be happy in time, happy in eternity, you must be obedient to your masters; their interest is yours. God made one portion of men to do the working, and another to do the thinking; how good God is! Now, you have no trouble or anxiety; but ah! you can’t imagine how perplexing it is to your masters and mistresses to have so much thinking to do in your behalf! You cannot appreciate your blessings; you know not how happy a thing it is for you, that you were born of that portion of the human family which has the working, instead of the thinking to do! Oh! how grateful and obedient you ought to be to your masters! How beautiful are the arrangements of Providence! Look at your hard, horny hands—see how nicely they are adapted to the labor you have to perform! Look at our delicate fingers, so exactly fitted for our station, and see how manifest it is that God designed us to be His thinkers, and you the workers—Oh! the wisdom of God!”—I used to attend a Methodist church, in which my master was a class leader; he would talk most sanctimoniously about the dear Redeemer, who was sent “to preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised”—he could pray at morning, pray at noon, and pray at night; yet he could lash up my poor cousin by his two thumbs, and inflict stripes and blows upon his bare back, till the blood streamed to the ground! all the time quoting scripture, for his authority, and appealing to that passage of the Holy Bible which says, “He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes!” Such was the amount of this good Methodist’s piety.
Rosa leaned out the passenger window with a sigh, the breeze scattering her dark hair across her forehead. She made a quick face; the corners of her mouth pinched in a frown, and she leaned back inside the car shaking her head. Beside her Victor switched off the engine.

“How bad is it?” he asked. He glanced into the rear view mirror and then turned in his seat to look out his window. His face was pale, a light blush creeping into his cheeks. “Is it fixable?”

Rosa shrugged. She brushed the hair out of her eyes and smiled, deep dimples bookending her mouth. “At least we’re alive,” she said.

Victor threw off his seat belt and jumped out of the car, the door slamming shut behind. Overhead startled birds took flight. “Damn it,” he yelled. His car sat uneven and slumped on the side of an empty road, the back tires flat. The bumper lay a few feet away, smashed and crooked beside the tall bank he had tried to drive off from. “Damn it,” he said again.

Rosa stood behind him smiling, her arms crossed. “In retrospect,” she said, “that was not so smart.”

Victor frowned and held up his hand to her. “Shut it,” he said. He leaned down beside his car, trembling hands touching one of the punctured tires.

Around them dark woods stood quiet, the only sound the purling of a nearby river. Victor pulled out his cell phone and leaned against the car.

“Who are you going to call?” Rosa asked. She stood beside him and leaned in close to see his phone.

He scrolled through his list of contacts, frowning. “Ghost-busters,” he said. He moved the phone from her view. “Don’t be nosy.”

Rosa crossed her arms and looked up and down the road; both ends curved away, vanishing around corners of tall grass. She glanced back at the way they had come and frowned.

“There’s no signal,” Victor said. He held the phone away from his body. “There’s nothing here!”

Rosa checked her own phone as well. “Well, what are we going to do?” she asked.

Victor put away his phone and kicked at his car with gritted teeth. “This is your fault,” he snapped. He held a crooked finger in Rosa’s face.

“Hold on a second,” she yelled. “How is this my fault?”

Victor kicked at the car again.

“I didn’t tell you to drive off a four-foot drop,” Rosa said. “That, buddy, was all your doing.”

Victor stood silent, his gaze trailing slowly from his feet up to Rosa’s face. He sighed and tried to smile.

Rosa smiled back. “So what are we going to do?” she asked.

Victor checked his phone again for a signal. He glanced down the road with a heavy sigh and wiped away the sweat that had beaded on the tip of his nose. He walked out and picked up the bumper, tossing it into the high weeds beside the car. “That,” he said panting, “was the first thing on my list. Second ….”

He stared past the steep drop then back out to the road. “Second,” he said, “I guess we need to walk somewhere. At least until somebody stops.”

“Or if we get our phone signals back,” Rosa said. She stood quiet for a moment. “Which way?”

Victor looked up and down the road. “Well,” he said, “we need to follow the road back into town, right?”

Rosa looked past him, out to the woods, then back to the road. “Left or right?” she asked.

Victor looked at both sides of the street, his arms crossed, his brow scrunched in thought. “Well,” he said, “left I guess.” He pointed down the street. “That way should take us around to that road in the woods.” He glanced in the other direction with a frown.

“And why are we trying to get back to that side?” Rosa asked.

“That road was hard to find to begin with.” She glanced down the street. “That path is in the opposite direction of the highway,” she said.

Victor glanced into the woods. “Well,” he said, “I know where it comes out at least.” He turned back to the road. “I don’t recognize this,” he said.

Rosa rolled her eyes. “I thought you grew up around here,” she said.

Victor stood quiet. Around them the woods seemed to be pressing in, the road suddenly smaller than it had been.

“Whatever,” Rosa said. “Let’s just start walking. I don’t want it to get dark on us.”

Victor nodded and they both started down the road. Rosa checked her phone again and then closed it with a sigh.

“Hey, I do remember this,” Victor said. He looked back the way they had come. “Sort of.”

Rosa watched the woods as they passed, her eyes shifting back and forth to both sides. “What do you mean ‘sort of’?” she asked.

Victor stopped on the side of the road and kicked at an old rusted guard-rail that was hidden in the tall grass. He smiled. “We’re near the Donkey Lady Bridge,” he said.

Rosa smiled, her eyes bright. “The what?” She rolled her eyes again.

Victor walked the length of the rail, a faint smiled hanging on his face. He laughed to himself. “The Donkey Lady Bridge,” he said. “Don’t tell me you’ve never heard of it.” Victor joined Rosa’s side again and they continued down the road.

Rosa shook her head.

“You’ve lived here for three years,” Victor said. “And you’ve never heard of it?”

“Was I supposed to?”

Victor glanced back at the guard rail with a smile. “It’s a local legend,” he said. “Every city has them.”

Rosa brushed her hair out of her face and smiled. “Okay,” she mused.

Victor checked his phone again and returned it to his pocket with a frown.

“Well, what’s the legend?”

Victor glanced back at the way they had come; already his car was hard to see in the approaching gloom of evening. “It’s just a haunted bridge.”

Rosa rolled her eyes again. “Great story,” she said. “Remind me not to buy your book.”
Victor shook his head with a frown. “A woman was killed there,” he said. “She was murdered, drowned.”

Rosa checked her phone for a signal. “And she was a donkey woman?” she asked, putting her phone away.

“It’s an old story,” Victor said. “She’s called the donkey lady because she used to go everywhere with her pet donkey.” The two rounded the corner and came to another empty street. “The people who murdered her also drowned her donkey.”

“And she’s supposed to haunt the bridge?” Rosa asked.

Victor touched the tip of his nose with a smile. “Now you got it.”

Rosa stopped in her tracks. “What the hell is that?” she asked.

To their left an enormous building loomed high in the sky. Odd bits of trash lay attached to its frame like decorations. In the gloom it looked like the skeletal remains of a giant animal.

Rosa glanced up and down the empty street.

Victor smiled. “We’re close,” he said. He glanced further down the road. “The bridge is just a little further down.”

Rosa suddenly felt sick. She checked her phone again and frowned.

“Come on,” Victor said.

Rosa didn’t move. She glanced back to the strange building, her heart starting to pick up pace.

Victor laughed. “Come on. Don’t tell me you’re freaking out.”

All at once Rosa calmed down, a thin smile pressed to her chin. “All right,” she said. “Show me this bridge.”


On the other side of the rail a small bridge stood over a fast flowing creek. Beyond the bridge dark woods loomed.

“What do you mean?” Rosa asked. She could see Victor’s face wrinkled in discontent.

“They blocked it off. You use to be able to drive onto the bridge.”

Rosa smiled and stepped over the rail. “Well,” she said. “It’s not like we can drive your car.”

Victor smiled and crossed over the rail behind her. Rosa leaned over the edge to view the water passing by. She smiled and inhaled deeply, suddenly wrinkling her nose in disgust. “What is that smell?” she said, pulling her collar over her face.

Victor stood beside her and smelled the air. “There must be something dead nearby.” He leaned further over the edge. “Maybe it’s a cat or something.”

Rosa rolled her eyes, her nose still covered. “Or maybe it’s the donkey lady,” she said.

Victor smiled and pulled down the collar covering her face. “Maybe. You never know.” He leaned out over the edge again. Suddenly his face lit up. “You want to go under the bridge?”

Rosa peered over the edge as well. “Is there even room under there?” she asked.

Victor walked off the path and stopped at the bank near the water’s edge. “Yeah, there’s some room.”

Rosa frowned.

“Don’t worry,” Victor said. “We’re not going to go under, just check it out.”

Rosa rolled her eyes and followed Victor to the edge. Around them darkness began to fall.

At the water’s edge Rosa and Victor inched their way closer beneath the bridge. There was no more than two feet of earth before the footing sank away into the mud.

“It doesn’t smell bad under here,” Rosa said. She smiled.

Victor drew her close and held her hand. “The view’s pretty good too,” he said.

Rosa rolled her eyes but her smile didn’t falter. “Yeah, that’s not lame,” she said.

They drew in close for a kiss, the sound of running water echoing off the bridge. Suddenly there came a sound near the edge where they had been standing. Rosa and Victor looked up slowly.

At the water’s edge stood a man in ragged clothing. His face was thin and covered in sores.

Rosa held onto Victor, her breath caught in her throat.

“Hey buddy,” Victor said. “A little privacy.”

The man did not move. He glanced quickly around and then back to them.

Victor’s face hardened. “Get the hell out of here.”

The man pulled open his ragged jacket and gripped something in his hand. In the low light a large blade glimmered in the gloom. Victor’s face went pale, his grip on Rosa loose. “We don’t want any trouble,” Victor said.

The man walked closer to them. Victor pulled out his cell phone and held it to his ear. “I’m calling the police,” he said. “I’d start walking if I were you.”

The man smiled, his mouth full of rotten teeth.

Rosa held onto Victor and buried her face into his shoulder. She sobbed quietly.

The man stepped closer, the knife held at his side.

“Move back,” Victor told Rosa. He held out his arm for her to hold.

Rosa wiped away at her eyes and moved back as far as she could. Her foot sank into cold mud and she gasped, the sound hollow under the bridge.

Victor edged closer to the man, his face contorted in anger. He still had his phone in his hand. “I’m giving you one last chance,” he said.

The man stood his ground, his smile wide and ugly. Around them night crept in.

A car pulled up slowly near the bridge, its headlights dimmed, and parked near the guardrail. Inside, two men sat. The driver lit a cigarette. “Damn it,” said the passenger. “They blocked off the bridge.” The driver flicked off his ash through the window and frowned.

“Well, that sucks,” said the driver.

Suddenly there came a high pitched scream. The driver sat up quickly and put the car in reverse. Another scream cut into the air as the car sped away. The passenger glanced back towards the bridge.

“What the hell was that?” asked the driver.

The passenger looked at him with wide eyes. “I think it was the donkey lady!”

Voices de la Luna, 15 January 2013
Not a Second Too Soon
John Richmond

The boys were bored. Their parents were visiting friends—older people who had no kids—and it took the two six-year-olds almost no time to become fidgety and begin looking around for something to do.

“Why don’t you boys go out back to the pond?” the heaviest man suggested. “I know that there are fish in the pond, and I’ve even seen some frogs and a couple of turtles.”

“Frogs and turtles?” the boys said simultaneously. “How do we get to the pond?”

“You see that screen door, there?” the man pointed and asked.

The boys nodded, speechlessly.

“All you’ve got to do is go through there and you’ll see the pond—there’s a path that goes along it, too.”

The man had barely gotten past “You see that screen door, there …” when the boys leapt to their feet and were gone, not hearing the rest of what the man had said as well as the warning, “Make sure you stay out of the pond!”

“What do you want to do first?” Jack asked Jerry, once they were outside.

“I don’t know. What do you want to do?” Jerry asked in return.

“Look! There’s a hill!” Jerry pointed and shouted.

“Let’s climb to the top,” Jack began.

“And we can roll down!” Jerry concluded. “Maybe it can make us dizzy!”

“Yeah!” Jack agreed.

“Come on, let’s do it! It’ll be fun!”

“Me first!” Jack yelled as they ran toward the incline.

The incline rose parallel to the footpath that followed the edge of the pond. From top to bottom, it rose nearly fifteen feet.

It was an easy climb. But once the boys were at the top, the way down looked much steeper than they would ever have expected.

“You first,” Jerry offered.

Jack looked down the slope. “I don’t know. Maybe we shouldn’t do it.”


“No!” Jack answered immediately. “Are you?” he asked Jerry.

“No!” Jerry replied confidently.

“Then why don’t you go first?” Jack asked.

Jerry looked down the incline before he answered, “Okay, I will.”

Cautiously and tentatively, Jerry got down on the ground, parallel to and along the crest of the incline.

“So you think I won’t do it?” Jerry asked as he looked up at Jack.

“I never said that!” Jack answered.

“But you want me to go first!”

Jack didn’t even have to think before he responded. “Yeah,” he said.

“Okay, I’ll show you,” Jerry replied. Then, he allowed himself to roll down the incline toward the path and the pond. Jack watched him turn over and over, again and again, until he reached the path. There, Jerry stopped himself, stood up and tried to walk.

“Oh, wow!” he shouted. “Everything is spinning! Come on!” he called up to Jack. “It’s fun!”

Jack, who had a habit of purposely spinning himself around just to make himself dizzy, needed no further encouragement.

“All right!” he shouted down the incline. “Here I come!”

Within moments, Jack assumed the same position that Jerry had taken minutes before and readied himself for his descent.

“Come on!” Jerry called. “What are you waiting for?”

“I’m coming now!” Jack replied, and then he started rolling. He rolled and he rolled and he rolled down the incline, across the path and into the pond.

“Wow!” Jerry shouted. “That was great!”

Hitting the water was a shock to Jack, but in seconds he righted himself in waist-deep water and looked toward the shore, to Jerry.

“Well, come on out,” Jerry said, once he had finished laughing. Jack tried to move his feet but they were held fast in the mud. Then he felt himself sink, just a little.

“I can’t,” he called to Jerry.

“Why not?”

“I don’t know,” Jack replied. “It feels like I’m sinking.”

“Are you sure?” Jerry asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure. Every time I try and move my feet, I sink.”

“You’re in quicksand!” Jerry screamed. “Get out!”

“I can’t get out! Whenever I try to move, I sink even more!”

Jack shouted as the water crept up his chest.

“Do something!” Jack shouted. “Help me!”

Jerry tried to reach for Jack, but his arms were too short.

“You’re too far out! I can’t reach you!”

The water was now past Jack’s chest, and was approaching his armpits.

“Help me!” Jack shouted at Jerry.

“I … I,” Jerry stammered and ran toward the house.

“Wait!” Jack called. “Don’t go! Come back! Help me!”

Inch by inch, Jack sank deeper and deeper into the quicksand. Soon, the water was above his armpits and now began to lap over his shoulders.

“I’m going to die,” Jack said to himself. Then, from the edges of his consciousness he heard a voice—a familiar voice—that said, “Take this! Grab it and hold on! I’ll pull you out!”

Jack looked toward the edge of the pond and saw his mother holding out a broomstick to him.

“Grab it, Jack!” she shouted. “Grab it!”

The water was at his neck when he finally grabbed the end of the broomstick.

“Hold on!” she shouted. “Hold on real tight and I’ll pull you out!”

Slowly, inch by inch, Jack could feel his feet becoming dislodged from the mud and muck that had held him.

After a couple of minutes of pulling, he was within arm’s reach. Then his mother reached out for him and pulled him completely out of the pond.

“Mommy,” Jack said as innocently as anyone his age could say, “you saved me.”
It is 8 o’clock in the morning and the students are all sitting at their desks. Their teacher, Sister Mary Agatha, is standing in front of the room. She is scanning the students with watchful eyes, lightly tapping a wooden ruler against her palm. Her head slowly moves like a remote camera mounted near the ceiling of an airport terminal, the slap of the ruler making a barely audible sound. Her head stops moving. Her eyes focus on Donald, an eight-year-old boy. Then she moves on, still searching. After her eyes unscrew from Donald’s face and continue on their search, he lets out a muffled sigh. When she finishes her searching, her brow furrows and she slaps the ruler hard on the desk, making a loud popping noise. Sister Mary Agatha says with a shrill voice, “Donald Brown, come to me and be quick about it.”

Donald is unnerved by her announcement but quickly rises from his chair. He walks to the front of the classroom taking short cautious steps, like a boy unsure of his fate. Each footfall is as hesitant as the steps made by the humiliated Roman Emperor Theodosius in 390 AD when he walked up to Ambrose, the cheeky Bishop of Milan, and begged the bishop to permit him to take communion.

As Donald moves forward, he keeps his gaze glued to the silver cross dangling from a chain around Sister Mary Agatha’s neck to remind him that God will always be with him no matter what. During his walk he racks his brain trying to figure out what he has done wrong. No luck, he can’t figure it out. He stops one step from the nun’s habit, eyes still glued to the cross. He plants himself in front her, weaving ever so slightly, then steels his spine to receive the bad news that he’s confident she will hurl his way.

“Look me in the eye,” Sister Mary Agatha says with a sneer. Donald quickly obeys her command. But when he lifts his eyes to hers, he notices that her arms are folded across her chest like an irritated judge, or perhaps they are the folded arms of a soon-to-be-satisfied executioner.

Sister Mary Agatha says without moving her thin lips, “Turn around and face the class.”

Donald reckons she is now an executioner disguised as a ventriloquist. After giving it more thought, he concludes that God is speaking to him through her. He is loath to turn around, but he is basically a good boy, so he does as he is told, but only because he dreads the consequences for failing to disobey an order from God delivered through a bride of Christ.

Next she says in a voice laced with disdain, a voice that is now definitely hers: “Class,” she says, “I present to you a dirty little boy.”

The class stares at Donald with hearts full of sympathy, but their minds telegraph: better him than me.

Donald tucks his head into his shoulder blades, wondering why she considers him dirty and what he has done to deserve such random criticism.

Scanning the classroom full of squeaky clean children, she says, “Remember what I said about coming to school dirty?”

Donald swallows hard. The wide-eyed students nod in unison.

Donald flinches, his passion waning, his muscles evaporating under the iron fist of fanaticism. To give himself strength to endure the punishment he knows he will receive he projects an image of a rosary in his mind and begins to silently recite: “Hail Mary, full of grace….”

“Hand over your handkerchief, now,” she says in a tone several octaves above her pedantic range. Real disgust contorts her face. Then her voice lowers to a growl, and she says, “You do have a handkerchief on your person, or have you violated that rule, too?”

Donald, the follower of Christ and keeper of the Sister’s laws, knows that he’s is in a no-win situation. So he flicks off the projector which interrupts his rote prayer. He retrieves a handkerchief from his pants pocket and hands it over.

Sister Mary Agatha grabs the handkerchief with her talons and jabs it with her bony forefinger, then spits on the cloth bump shrouding the finger. With her other talon she grabs Donald’s hair and jerks his head toward her and begins rubbing the smudge aggressively.

Donald cries out, “Ouch!” Then he murmurs another round of “Hail Mary, full of grace…”

Sister Mary Agatha says, “Hush up, dirty boy.” She keeps on rubbing until blood begins to flow from a scab covering a wound
As for Donald, well, he’s pissed forevermore. for physically and verbally abusing a little boy in her charge. The pure and innocent. As for Sister Mary Agatha, she is forgiven blood is flowing freely from the flesh of an innocent little boy. caused the scab to peel away and reopens the wound, and now wound inflicted by his best buddy while they were sword fight

Well, I thought to myself, ‘Since Hilda and I have found this unusual markings. “This squirrel was my first attempt at pre

Yes, exactly, melanistic,” he beamed happily, glad to find someone who shared his love of nature. “The opposite of albino. I always admired the beauty of butterflies—and I thought back fondly to middle school, when I’d had my own collection for a couple of years. He had an impressive variety of local species, but I noticed that most of them appeared to be somewhat damaged, often with little chips missing along the edges of the wings. Still, it was an impressive collection.

“Did you collect all these around here?” I asked.

“It’s nice, I thought, to have a hobby that you can share with your wife. I glanced around the room to see what my wife Hazel was up to. I spotted her heading out the patio door with a drink in her hand, talking to Maria de la Rosa, the dean of the college. I was a new faculty member in the department of history, and this was my first dinner party at Schoenberg College, a small liberal arts school just north of San Antonio, so I was still getting to know many of the faculty and their spouses and significant others. I knew Jonas, of course, since we were in the same department, and not being the most outgoing sort, I had been looking at his display cases when he had come up to say hi. I recognized his wife by sight, though not by name, so since I tend to be terrible at remembering names, I was repeating to myself, “Jonas and Hilda, Jonas and Hilda, Jonas and Hilda.”

Jonas touched my arm and directed me to an adjoining room, which was filled with other objets de nature—fossils, animal skulls, pressed flowers—and most notably a number of stuffed animals. “I’ve always been interested in collecting things, especially things I find on my walks or drives through the hill country, so a few years ago I decided to take up a new hobby, taxidermy.” He pointed proudly to an eastern gray squirrel, with unusual markings. “This squirrel was my first attempt at preserving an animal. It was so interesting looking, as you can see, with the back half brown like normal squirrels, and the front half completely black....”

“Melanistic,” I muttered to myself.

“Sure, honey, no problem,” Jonas said, fishing for his keys.

“A moment before it was only a scab covering a healing flesh wound inflicted by his best buddy while they were sword fight

Butterfly Collection
James R. Adair

“This is a red admiral, and this is a buckeye, and this one is a sulphur butterfly. Oh, and that one’s a California sister.” Dr. Jonas Savage, chair of the history department, was pointing to butterflies mounted under glass with long, thin pins connecting them to the base of the display case. I looked appreciatively—

It was time for dinner, and several tables were set up outside with plastic tablecloths and folding chairs borrowed from the school. “Everybody please take a seat,” Sharon said. Hazel and I took our seats at the table closest to the driveway, where an old jeep was parked. Jonas and Sharon brought plates of barbecue, bowls of potato salad and pinto beans, and trays of dinner rolls to each of the tables. Pitchers of iced tea were already there. As they neared our table, I heard Sharon say quietly, “Jonas, can’t you please park your jeep on the street so that we don’t have to look at it? You know I hate seeing dead butterflies in the grill and thinking about roadkill, especially while we’re eating.”

“Yeah, like cheating on your wife,” I thought to myself, though of course I didn’t verbalize my thoughts. If Sharon was his wife, who was Hilda? After our hostess moved away to talk to other guests, I told Hazel about my conversation with Jonas inside the house.

“His dead bugs and animals, I’ll bet,” Sharon said, grinning. “I really can’t stand those things, but they make him happy, so I put up with it. There are certainly worse hobbies.”

“Maybe,” I nodded. “All I know is, I’m not going to ask. If she’s happy with the arrangement, whatever it is, that’s fine with me. And if she doesn’t know about it, she’s not going to find out from me. But you know, she’s bound to know about Hilda. Jonas isn’t very discreet about throwing her name around.”

“A moment before it was only a scab covering a healing flesh wound inflicted by his best buddy while they were sword fighting with sticks after school the day before. The rubbing has caused the scab to peel away and reopens the wound, and now blood is flowing freely from the flesh of an innocent little boy. Behold, the Lord is pleased when he sees blood flowing from the pure and innocent. As for Sister Mary Agatha, she is forgiven for physically and verbally abusing a little boy in her charge. And as for Donald, well, he’s pissed forevermore.

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“Look, Hilda’s got a pipevine swallowtail caught in her grill, and look at it? You know I hate seeing dead butterflies in the grill and thinking about roadkill, especially while we’re eating.”

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“I don’t know,” Hazel mused. “She seems very happy with her husband. Maybe Hazel isn’t his girlfriend, maybe she’s his sister, or just a friend of the family who shares his interest in outdoor things.”

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Chapter Thirteen

Why are you so anxious to leave Iran?

“Why are you so anxious to leave Iran?” Maryam asked Cyrus, who became embarrassed and couldn’t form a polite response. Although his sister and all other relatives had welcomed and hosted him so generously, he was really missing his family and the variety of life in the United States, but now he was simply unable to admit this to her. Instead, he confessed that he had invited Reza to join them for dinner. Hospitable as always, Maryam immediately asked the housekeeper to add another place setting to the dining table.

Maryam had come home early to prepare a scrumptious Persian goodbye supper for Cyrus. After dinner, Jamshid and Bahram were to take him to Tehran airport, three hours before his scheduled flight. Cyrus’s mother and Parviz entered together and greeted everybody. Their mother was now strong enough to walk a short distance. She wanted to say farewell to Cyrus and would spend the night at Maryam’s house. Soon Tooraj arrived, too.

“As soon as Reza comes, we’ll have dinner,” Maryam declared.

After a round of drinks and many cheerful toasts, Maryam glanced at her diamond-studded watch and noticed time was running short. She was concerned about Cyrus’s schedule and told the housekeeper to fill the water glasses and bring the big bowl with chicken soup to the table. Habib joined the family in the living room and greeted Mother.

Mother was sitting next to Cyrus and inquired about Dr. Shaad, “Have you heard anything from him?”

“He left a message that everything is fine.”

“Please talk to him and find out what the exact diagnosis is,” Mother begged him.

Cyrus left the room and went to the hall to call Dr. Shaad’s office. “Forgive me, Dr. Shaad is with a patient,” the receptionist told him, but promised to remind the doctor to call back soon. Cyrus left his name and Maryam’s phone number and returned to the living room where everybody had settled in for a nice chat.

Reza had not arrived yet, Dr. Shaad had not returned Cyrus’s call, Mother didn’t know her biopsy results, and the dinner was not quite ready to be served, but Cyrus needed to leave soon for Tehran Airport. Maryam was tense and wanted to make sure her special dinner could be enjoyed by everybody. Maryam walked up to Cyrus and suggested, “You have a tight schedule tonight, so let’s go ahead with the dinner. I’ll save a dish for Reza.”

She invited everybody to the dining room. Just as everybody was seated on his or her chair, the phone rang. Cyrus expected a call from Dr. Shaad, Maryam thought the call was from Reza, and Parviz was hoping he’d hear from his partner about the bank balance of their college after today’s deposits.

Habib got up first and picked up the phone. “This is Habib. May I help you?”

“I need to speak to Parviz, please.”

Habib called Parviz. Parviz smiled triumphantly and went to the phone.

The soup was served, and while they were eating, Mother’s conversation was mainly about Cyrus’s family and why he should return to Iran for good and bring his family. Habib loudly applauded her advice. “But only for a visit,” Habib advised. “We want to see your family, and your family should really explore Iran. Do bring Emily here so we can get to know her.”

Parviz finished his telephone conversation and quietly returned to his chair, looking unhappy and concerned. Mother noticed his frown and became alarmed. She presumed he must have heard about the biopsy result. Before she got an opportunity to ask Parviz, the phone rang again.

This time it was Maryam who rushed to the phone. “This is Maryam, who’s speaking?”

“This Dr. Shaad. May I talk to Cyrus, please?”

Maryam called Cyrus and told Mother that Dr. Shaad was on the phone. Mother smiled anxiously.

“Hello, my friend. I have good news. Yes, I’m calling about your mother’s biopsy.” Like always Dr. Shaad sounded optimistic and cheerful. “The pathology report is negative for cancer.”

Cyprus was delighted to hear that, but as the curious cancer surgeon he was, he wanted to know the exact tissue diagnosis. “Did it show anything else?”

Dr. Shaad had expected a jubilant response and was taken aback. “I told you no cancer was found, Cyrus,” he insisted.

“I understand, but what was the histological diagnosis of the biopsy tissues?”

“None, nothing! The pathologist didn’t identify any tissue in the specimen at all. It contained only blood clots and some necrotic cells. But he definitely didn’t see any cancerous cells.”

That response disappointed Cyrus. “Then the report is actually inconclusive. You really cannot say that no tumor was found. It would have been better to positively rule out cancer by identifying non-cancerous tissue, some sort of benign ulcer.”

Dr. Shaad did not appreciate Cyrus’s assertion, although it was couched in polite and academic terms. He repeated, “I call the result absolutely negative. I am sure it is only an ulcer. Look, I have seen hundreds of these kind of lesions and know a cancerous ulcer when I see one.”

When Cyrus returned to his chair, Mother was waiting for the news of the biopsy result.

“It’s not cancerous.”

She was pleased and sighed with relief. “What did it show, though?” she asked.

“Nothing, only some blood clots.”

“Did he see anything else?” Mother asked again. “Was there any infection?”

Cyrus was in a difficult position and unable to satisfy his mother’s legitimate and relevant questions. After all, she was raising the same reservations about the accuracy of the biopsy diagnosis that he had brought to Dr. Shaad’s attention.

“Dr. Shaad said he has seen hundreds of ulcers and has no doubt you do not have cancer, only an ulcer.”

Parviz had remained quiet and introspective, but when he noticed Mother’s concerns, he interjected, “The doctor hasn’t seen any tumor. All he saw during the procedure was a bleeding ulcer. I trust his observation. We should be satisfied that’s what it is.” In a gentle voice he added, “Look, Mother, you’re doing one hundred percent better than a few weeks ago, and you’re responding very well to the anti-ulcer drugs. That alone is a strong indication of an accurate diagnosis.”
Mother touched her abdomen, and though she felt a slight discomfort, she hid her doubts. “I guess you’re right. I am just too worried.”

Habib also supported Parviz’s reassurances. “You look great, and soon the pain will totally go away.”

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As they were eating the dinner, the phone rang again. Maryam went to the living room and picked it up. She listened for a while without saying a word. Her face became pale. Suddenly she looked terrified. Parviz stared at her, immediately knew what Maryam was hearing, and got up and put his arm around her shoulders. The conversation around the dining table came to halt. Everybody was becoming worried. Simultaneously all heads turned toward Reza’s vacant chair. Mother was the only one who was still preoccupied with her own problems and suspected the call had something to do with her illness. When Maryam finally hung up and came to the table, Habib asked, “Is everything all right with Reza?”

“The call was from one of Reza’s roommates. Reza has been arrested. They have taken him away to God knows where. The Shah’s security agents ransacked their apartment about two hours ago. Apparently they were searching for papers and tapes of Ayatollah Khomeini.”

Parviz said, “I always feared this moment would come.”

“So you knew about his arrest?” Cyrus asked Parviz.

“Not exactly. The earlier caller tonight had told me that Reza’s apartment had been raided, but he wasn’t sure if Reza was there at the time.” Parviz looked at Cyrus doubtfully and continued, “The caller said Reza had been out, shopping with you, Cyrus.”

Cyrus brushed aside Parviz’s aggressive glare and said, “He dropped me here shortly after lunch and left to go home to study. This is what he told me he was going to do.”

“I hope they didn’t follow you,” Maryam worried.

Habib became rather angry when he heard the news and interrupted their conversation. “That foolish boy got what he was asking for.” He quoted a Persian proverb: “When you eat cold melon, you should expect to get a little chill.”

Parviz’s wrinkled forehead revealed his deep concern. He said, “I hope he didn’t carry any of Ayatollah Khomeini’s tapes at the time of his arrest.”

His statement added fuel to Habib’s anger. “Foolish boy! That’s all he needs. The government is after those tapes. They’re full of Ayatollah Khomeini’s anti-Shah’s rhetoric. That cleric is up to no good. He always was and always will be!”

Maryam got into the thick of the conversation, trying to stop Habib’s ranting. “His friend found the apartment in a big mess with blood stains in the hallway and on the walls of the apartment.”

With a grim face Parviz said, “They must have beaten him badly.”

Conversation stopped for a while. Reza’s arrest threw a dark shadow over the farewell dinner. Cyrus cleared his throat trying to change the topic. When he accidentally touched his jacket, he felt the tape in the pocket and suddenly realized he still had Ayatollah Khomeini’s folded photo. Immediately he became concerned and frightened both for Reza and for himself. The Savak agents with their savage torture usually succeeded in squeezing every piece of information out of a prisoner, but now he had to place all his trust in Reza’s determination and his young strength.

He fervently hoped that Reza wouldn’t disclose the whereabouts of every single tape he had distributed. Cyrus decided to tuck tape and photo into the pocket of his jacket when he left the country, because he had been told they rarely searched passengers’ pockets at the airport.

Soon the house became crowded. An hour later, assembled relatives and other well-wishers were drinking tea and munching Persian almond and pistachio cookies in the living room. But Habib was still rolling over Reza’s situation. “He is an idiot. He will lose everything and end up with nothing.”

“I hope they treat him gently,” Maryam hoped.

Bahram was not surprised with the news. He approached Cyrus quietly. “Reza has been working with a group of militant religious students who are directly connected to Ayatollah Khomeini. I suspect he may be in deep trouble.”

Cyrus asked Maryam, “Did the caller mention anything about any Ayatollah Khomeini tapes in the apartment?”

She replied, “His roommate said the agents found nothing in the apartment.”

Cyrus let out a deep sigh of relief. He was glad he had accepted the tape and tapped his jacket again.

Bahram entered the debate. “By putting the Ayatollah in the limelight abroad, the Shah is making a hero out of him and connecting him to the world. Soon the Ayatollah is going to be on the cover of every international newsmagazine.”

Tooraj, like always, made sure everybody heard his opinion. “The Shah shouldn’t be afraid of Ayatollah Khomeini—the man is simply a mullah, not a revolutionary hero. The Shah should let him return to Qum and allow him to attend to religious matters just like the pope does in the Vatican.”

Habib got agitated when he heard Ayatollah Khomeini’s name and shouted, “That’s what he says, but don’t be naïve! That mullah dreams about running the country and covering every woman with a black veil.”

Tooraj objected. “He can’t fool me. He will destroy the movement if he seeks a political office. He may end up a mere outsider.”

Habib interrupted angrily, “He is right in the middle of it. He is blowing up this country with inflammatory speeches. He is the cause of this whole crisis.” Habib continued ranting and stopped only when Maryam came to him and whispered a few words in his ear.

Meanwhile Parviz turned to the assembled guests. “Has anybody actually listened to Ayatollah’s fiery sermons?”

Only Bahram nodded and explained, “The man is a powerful orator. He begins with a verse from the Koran, then ridicules the Shah and his government, and then escalates and condemns the government as illegitimate. He rides on the yearning of the people for a democratic government.”

This explanation brought another strong reaction from Habib. “This is all pure politics. That man wants to replace the government and become the new Shah.”

Tooraj objected again, “The Ayatollah could help the people get the kind of government they want before it’s too late and the entire country falls apart.”

Habib jumped from his chair and emphatically waved his finger in their faces. “You are all mistaken. The Shah is in solid command. He will pacify his secular opponents by granting them some freedoms and buy some time for economic reforms. That
will stop inflation and automatically put an end to this nonsense of religious fervor.” His forceful remarks ended any discussion of politics. Nobody dared to debate anymore, especially against their host.

Maryam pleaded, “This is Cyrus’s last hour here. Please, let’s talk about something pleasant.”

“How about a nice poem?” Tooraj asked with a smile.

Habib frowned and snickered, “We are going from bad to worse. Falling into an abyss instead of a ditch.” Maryam laughed at her husband’s use of this well-known Iranian proverb.

Meanwhile Tooraj, who had brought an anthology of contemporary Iranian poetry for Cyrus, dug it out of his bag. “Here are poems from some of our favorite poets, including some by Ahmad Shamloo and by Siavooosh Kasrai, and then of course ‘Arash, the Archer,’ Kasrai’s famous ballad. We need to end Cyrus’s visit with a recital.”

Habib looked unhappy but kept quiet when Maryam reminded him they had little time to spare and begged Tooraj to read only a short verse. He agreed and immediately his sonorous words rolled out:

*Those were humiliating days*  
our fortunes were lost  
the enemies were pillaging our hamlets  
our souls and cities in ruin  
harrowing tales went untold  
life hid under the cold stones.

*Those were humiliating days*  
disgraceful times  
bravery snarled in a maze of doubt  
love was gasping in the dying hearts…

Habib exploded and interrupted Tooraj. “Enough of dying hearts. My dear friends, the words should be this way: heart stops, brain expires, and body dies.”

Bahram and Maryam pleaded with him to let Tooraj continue. Habib reluctantly agreed, on the condition that he did not have to listen to more than one poem. Tooraj nodded and resumed:

The mass of people like  
a thunderous ocean  
in blistering turmoil  
poised, ascended  
and crushed as  
a towering wave.  
From its crest,  
from its shell,  
the ocean delivered a man:  
“I am Arash!”  
Facing the enemy, he roared;  
“I am Arash, the archer….”

Bahram joined in, and the two continued in a verbal duet.

Habib was the only one who didn’t enjoy the recital. He looked miserable and ranted, “You guys are telling fairy tales. This is not true Persian poetry. You ought to recite one of Hafez’s ghazals or Khayam’s quatrains instead.”

Maryam intervened, “It is getting late. Let’s take Cyrus to the airport.”

Tooraj and Bahram packed Cyrus’s belongings in Jamshid’s car. Cyrus hugged and kissed everybody. Mother had gone to her room to lie down, and now Cyrus went to her room to say farewell. She got up painfully and kissed his cheeks, giving him a small handcrafted wooden box. “This is for your wife and children,” she said, smiling.

Cyrus opened the box. Pieces of 22-karat gold jewelry sparkled inside: a handcrafted bracelet for his wife and one pin for each child. His mother seized both of his hands with her tiny hands that had remained astonishingly smooth and soft. She gazed into his eyes with love and concern. “Give my love to your family. Let us hope I can visit them someday.” Suddenly a stomach cramp overcame her. She crumpled against the doorframe and took a deep breath. Then she continued, “Be careful, my son! Don’t carry dangerous materials with you to the airport.”

Cyrus wondered if she knew about the tape in his pocket. Was she reading his mind as she had done often when he was young, or was it just a routine admonishment? He just nodded. She kissed and hugged him again. “I’ll really miss you, my son.”

Cyrus felt her wet cheek and heard her whisper, “Thank you for your visit. It is the reason why I have felt much better lately.”

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**The Jetty**

*by Jay Brandon and Joe Labatt*

Reviewed by Mo H Saidi

*The Jetty* is a psychological tale set in Port Aransas, Texas. For those Texans who have traveled to this popular summer coastal destination, the pleasure of revisiting the ferry ride where one may observe dolphins breaching the boats and leaping above the water is immense. The narrative paints a realistic picture of the seaside community during late summer. *The Jetty’s* main characters, Michael and Kathy, are college buddies vacationing in a rented cottage while examining their romantic commitment. However, they unexpectedly meet another couple with a mysterious past and strange behavior. The hallucinating scene of the fancy dinner in a dining room decorated with painting masterpieces is remarkable. As Jack, the host, plays classical music and Vivian, the hostess with her impressive white gown, entertains the guests, other delusional events unfold, which send Michael into a frenzy. Thereafter, an exciting chain of events adds more mystery to the story. The novel reaches its climax at the Port Aransas jetty where the characters traverse time zones. In a retro-cognition tradition, they re-enact and visualize the events of the last century as far back as the 1920s, as well as uncovering a tale of the past illicit trade and mysterious drowning of a cargo boat. A series of unexplained scenes (e.g., a car accident, the appearance of a wolf-like creature, and a giant) serves to increase the confusion. This entertaining short novel has a romantic and sentimental flavor mixed with supernatural suspense.

At the end, Michael and Kathy leave the coast as “the familiar sound of the clanking chains signaled the departure of the ferry from the island.” Tested and frightened, they survive the ordeal. Unscathed, their romance remains intact or becomes even stronger.

*Jay Brandon is a successful attorney and the award-winning author of 15 mystery novels. His bestselling book Fade the Heat was published in 13 foreign countries, optioned by Steven Spielberg’s Amblin Entertainment, and nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award. He lives in San Antonio, Texas.*

*Joe Labatt, the co-author of The Jetty, has been the owner/manager of Corona Publishing Company since 1997. Labatt has brought the finest in Texas fiction and nonfiction to both regional and national audiences.*
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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, Hineni (2003) and Meanwhile (2005), were both published by Finishing Line Press. She is also the author of Henry Roth: The Man and His Work and co-author of Passion and Craft, interviews with fiction writers. A professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio, she has received teaching, creative writing, and research awards from the university. She has taught as a Fulbright professor at the Aristotlean 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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Poetry & Arts Events in San Antonio

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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.puroslam.com.

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

Every Fourth Wednesday – Barnes & Noble, The Shops at La Cantera, 15900 La Cantera Parkway, Bldg. 27, San Antonio, TX 78256. Host: Voices of the 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.


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.thecarver.org

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

INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES – The Institute is concerned with the people who produced Texas events—people who created the robust kaleidoscope that is Texas today. www.texancultures.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 the 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.mcnyart.org

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

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

SAN 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 visitorsto, San Antonio and South Texas through the performance of live music. www.sasymphony.org

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

WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE – Extensive exhibit covers natural history and natural science of Texas. Rebuilt on grounds are four early Texas houses and a furnished log cabin. For more Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio, go to www.voicesdelaluna.com.

Joint Voices Monthly Venue

Poetry Workshop, Reading, Open Mic

La Cantera Barnes & Noble

every 4th Wednesday – 6 to 9 PM

Voices Mission Statement

Voices de la Luna publishes a quarterly poetry and arts magazine in four formats, focusing on writers and artists of South Texas. The organization is committed to use its leverage to inspire the youth, promote poetry and arts through their involvement, and use the magazine as a platform for all poets and artists to share their work with others, and it is dedicated to use poetry and arts both for educational and healing purposes in the communities.