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Laurie Ann Guerrero, A San Antonio Original
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Voices de la Luna Monthly Literary Evening
Poetry and Arts Presentation
The Fourth Wednesday, September through June
Poetry Workshop at 6:00
Featured Poet at 7:00
Poetry & Music & Open Mic at 7:30
Barnes & Noble at the Shops at La Cantera
15900 La Cantera Parkway, Bldg 27
San Antonio, TX 78256

Submission Guidelines
To submit material for publication in Voices de la Luna, go to voicesdelaluna.submishmash.com.

Voices de la Luna is a quarterly publication dedicated to the artistic expression of a wide range of perspectives and topics. In the service of that goal, we welcome diverse, well-written submissions from every quarter.

Editor’s Note
James R. Adair

Wild honey and mustang grape, with a hint of lavender—a pleasantly syrupy but not sickeningly sweet scent—wafts on the breeze as I write these words, the familiar smell of mountain laurels, the purple harbinger of spring in the Texas Hill Country, which includes the northern reaches of San Antonio. Spring, that time of year when cool, windy days alternate with warm, even hot days—a reminder that the inevitable pattern of scaring daytime heat followed by warm, sticky nights that characterizes summer will soon be upon us. April in particular offers many attractions: National Poetry Month, Fiesta, and the start of baseball season, to name a few (plus a few lowlites—tax day, anyone?). This issue of Voices de la Luna touches on all of these topics, and more.

Voices always offers a diverse selection of poetry by well-known and unknown poets, youth poetry, and poetry therapy, and we have many fine poems to offer in this issue. Featured are poems by Joan Strauch Seifert, Laurie Ann Guerrero, Sheila Black, and Naomi Shihab Nye, all local poets. We also remember the life of San Antonio author, editor, and publisher Palmer Hall, whose visage is featured on the cover.

In conjunction with National Poetry Month, April is also the time for the annual Voices de la Luna fundraiser, and the theme of our celebration this year is the mutual influence of the medical profession and poetry: “Medicine, Poetry & Arts: The Muse Meets Caduceus.” We will honor San Antonio’s first poet laureate and frequent Voices contributor Carmen Tafolla, and we will also feature poetry written by medical professionals (see p. 22 for two such poems). This emphasis is hardly novel, since physicians have contributed their voices to the poetic conversation for centuries. Figures such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna), François Rabelais, Thomas Campion, John Keats, Friedrich Schiller, William Carlos Williams, and Alice Jones, just to mention a few of the best-known physician-poets, have all combined healing and lyric in their work.

Fiesta is a distinctly San Antonio tradition, a joyous celebration of spring, multiculturalism, and Texas history. Although technically lasting only eleven days, there are enough pre- and post-Fiesta events to fill out almost the entire month of April: parades (daytime and nighttime, on the streets and on the river), fairs, rides, flowers, colorful buntings, music, food, King Antonio and el Rey Feo, glittering duchesses and the Queen of the Order of the Alamo, and lots and lots of cascarones.

And finally, baseball. Horace Traubel, in his multivolume work With Whitman in Camden, in which he chronicles his conversations with Walt Whitman during the last years of the poet’s life, records an interesting exchange between chronicler and poet concerning what was already becoming the American pastime. One Sunday in April 1889, Traubel, in response to a comment Whitman made about the return of some baseball players from a world tour, wrote this: “I said: ‘Baseball is the hurrah game of the republic!’ He was hilarious: ‘That’s beautiful: the hurrah game! well—it’s our game: that’s the chief fact in connection with it: America’s game: has the snap, go, fling, of the American game! well—it’s our game: that’s the chief fact in connection with it: America’s game: has the snap, go, fling, of the American atmosphere—belongs as much to our institutions, fits into them as significantly, as our constitutions, laws: is just as important in the sum total of our historic life.’” We tip our hat to baseball by considering baseball at the movies and by revisiting that most famous of baseball poems, “Casey at the Bat” (p. 31). To conclude with another Whitman quote: “I believe in all that—in baseball, in picnics, in freedom.” What more needs to be said?
Ramin Samandari has created a collage of selected photos from Palmer Hall’s life, producing this graphic art in memory of Palmer Hall, who passed away on 9 February at five in the morning.

Samandari has exhibited his photographic work in major galleries locally, nationally, and in Europe.

His numerous exhibitions at Gallery Nord reflect his ongoing spiritual connection to some of the landscapes around San Antonio. Enchanted Rock, the Pedernales River, and the Guadalupe River are the backdrops for his last collection, which is called *Earthly Bodies*, whether in the form of a human figure or an isolated tree or rock.

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

For more information, please visit: http://www.magicalrealismstudio.com.

**San Antonio Celebrates National Poetry Month**
http://npmsa.com/

*Monday, April 15*
*Voices de la Luna* publication release: www.voicesdelaluna.com

*Wednesday, April 17*
International School of the Americas at Lee High School
cbrook12@neisd.net, neisd.net/isa

*Wednesday, April 17*
**An Evening of Medicine, Poetry & Art**
The Bright Shawl, 819 Augusta Street, 6:30 – 9:00 pm. *Voices de la Luna*, in collaboration with the L3 Committee of the San Antonio Public Library Foundation, will stage an evening of medicine, poetry, and the arts, “The Muse Meets Caduceus,” honoring San Antonio’s inaugural Poet Laureate Dr. Carmen Tafolla. Admission is $100 per person and includes a seated dinner, wine, and poetry performances. A related exhibit of paintings, sculpture, and photography will be on display. For tickets contact Lou Taylor: (210) 930-4633, louisebtaylor@sbcglobal.net, www.voicesdelaluna.com.

*Thursday, April 18*
Seminar on *The Man with the Blue Guitar* by Wallace Stevens
www.hausmannmillworks.com

For the complete listing of NPMSA’s events, visit http://npmsa.com.
Featured Poem

While Viewing a Late Renoir

Joan Strauch Seifert

They say Renoir’s arthritis got so bad that he had someone tie his brush onto his wrist, and then he painted The Serenade. Other paintings too, perhaps, toward the last, but I’ve seen only The Serenade.

His strokes seem too broad, too pastel, his lady’s lips too wide, almost expressionless, but with the slightest smile, I guess. Her figure’s undefined; skin hues meld with her dress. And you can hardly tell that a woman beside her in the painting is playing some instrument—it must be a guitar. But I can’t really tell.

He searched, longing for the lilt, they say, his throbs not worth a mention when the euphoric moments came.

Maybe the meek, contorted wrist, the enslaved fingers, made little difference. Maybe his soul instructed, and he heard the song.

Maybe it’s the willingness that’s art.

I see the other woman, now, and the guitar. And the lady’s lips are smiling.

First published in From Many Springs
(Rhyme or Reason Word Design Studio)

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. At Gemini Ink we believe human story in all its diverse and complicated forms and genres—from poetry and fiction to memoir and oral tradition—is essential to developing compassion and richness in both individual and community life. We encourage focused reading, writing, and exchange at every level, from the elementary school student and the incarcerated youth to the polished professional and the elder who has always wanted to record her family stories. For more information, visit http://www.geminink.org.

And Now

Naomi Shihab Nye

Maybe a bit more love for each minute this corner could use some loving scraps of paper roadside these photographs need a dust cloth we did not say goodbye to someone no idea she was leaving soon so now in startled rooms everything in honor

A new and unpublished poem in memory of Mim Scharlack

Mim Scharlack

Joan Strauch Seifert earned an English degree with a journalism-advertising minor at the University of Texas at Austin. Career areas include writing and editing advertising copy, teaching middle school English, authoring a weekly humor prose column in The Southwesterner, a Houston newspaper, work in the corporate world, and managing family-owned real estate rentals. Life experience and the muse’s persistent grasp have allowed her publication in a number of journals in Texas and the US. She has published three poetry chapbooks, and lately, From Many Springs, available at The Twig in San Antonio.
Jim LaVilla-Havelin is a poet, educator, and arts administrator. He is the author of four books of poems: *Rites of Passage* (Charon Press, 1968), *What the Diamond Does Is Hold It All In* (White Pine Press, 1978), *Simon’s Masterpiece* (White Pine Press, 1983), and most recently, *Counting* (Pecan Grove Press, 2010). LaVilla-Havelin’s poems have appeared in the *Texas Observer*, anthologies *Is This Forever, Or What?* and *Between Heaven & Texas*, in the 2006–2012 editions of the *Texas Poetry Calendar*, and in *Big Land, Big Sky, Big Hair*, Dos Gatos Press’s anthology from the Texas Poetry Calendar. LaVilla-Havelin is an arts administrator, educator, and critic. He has been the Director of the Young Artist Programs at the Southwest School of Art, from where he is retiring after seventeen years in May 2013 to teach, write, and consult. He is editing a collection of poetry and visual art about sport entitled *Levelling the Field* and is working on a book-length poem about jazz, *Playlist*. LaVilla-Havelin is the Coordinator of National Poetry Month events in San Antonio and the guest poetry editor at the *San Antonio Express-News*. He has taught, read, given workshops and presentations, and offered teacher training throughout the Northeast, Ohio, and Texas. An eighteen-year Texan, LaVilla-Havelin lives with his wife, the artist Lucia LaVilla-Havelin, in Lytle, Texas.

Mo H Saidi: In San Antonio, we know you as an editor, poet, and educator. Are we missing something here about you, perhaps your work as a peace activist as indicated on your shirt? Jim Lavilla-Havelin: I consider all of my work of a piece, and committed to peace, to human and humane relationships with each other, with the environment, and with the planet. As a community organizer and anti-war activist, draft resistor, poet in the schools, editor, critic, arts administrator—my work has been about education and peace and justice, community building.

Like a phrase in a poem, your last name has harmony and rhythm. How did you and your wife come up with the idea to merge your two last names?

Jim LaVilla-Havelin: I see it, or small-minded public officials, or xenophobia, but the honest, caring, forgiving, and giving, the neighborly sense of community, the open-ness, the hospitality, and the genuine concern—these traits of Texans touch me deeply.

Questions for Jim Lavilla-Havelin

Interviewed by Mo H Saidi

We feel that marriage is collaboration between equals; no one’s identity is subsumed. But you do hit an interesting point—it sounded right together. We’ve often said, had it not been sono-
rous, poetic, we would have looked for something else.

Does your wife collaborate with you on your poetry?

No, her art form is fiber. But she does listen, suggest, react. She is my first and most important audience. And she has a great ear. I think we’re very attuned to each other’s goals in our work, and listen/look closely to see that we’re getting where we want to go.

You are from the Northeast. What do you like most about San Antonio? Could it be the spicy Tex-Mex food?

While chipotle fire figures prominently, and the chance to sit out-side in December and January and not have to shovel snow count for a great deal, the real warmth, the warmth of the people won us over, and continues to win us over, charm us every day. Took some getting used to, the sir and ma’am of it, but abrazos and fierce friendships—there’s real heat.

Texans are known for being friendly, honest, and noble, or as somewhat naive and stubborn. How do you see Texans?

With clear-eyed caring—I can’t dismiss or discount racism when I see it, or small-minded public officials, or xenophobia, but the honest, caring, forgiving, and giving, the neighborly sense of community, the open-ness, the hospitality, and the genuine concern—these traits of Texans touch me deeply.

Recently here in SA, I was one of only five people listening to two nationally recognized poets read from their work. How can we expand our poetry audiences?

Education, youth, new voices, value all voices, read where they’re at. We are a city with a poet laureate, and a fine one, in Carmen Tafolla, who knows that it is through the romance of words exciting the spirits of our youth that our audiences will grow. The wagon we need to hitch to is the education wagon. When children love language (all languages) and writing and words, they do better in school, and when they do better in school, when they succeed, they feel better about who they are. And we have audiences for poetry for life. Our own poems, even as they deal with what is most important in our lives and minds, should also communicate, speak plainly, open doors.

Your last book of poems, *Counting*, was published by Pecan Grove Press. You have some references to death and dying, as in “Some Things to Do in the Face of Death.” Are you afraid of death, of counting your remaining days?

No. That specific poem was in response to the deeply untimely death of Manny Castillo, a community and arts activist and leader, taken from us too soon. The counting of *Counting* is not just about counting out time, but also the accounting—called to account for what we’ve done, what we’ve been, and it is also about doing work that counts for something.

In another poem, “Despair,” you write, “Don’t mourn, organize / Do the right thing / ….” Do you write poetry to make peace with yourself and forget about the “casket”?

The quote is from the poem about Manny Castillo, and I kind of liked quoting Joe Hill, the I.W.W. organizer and Spike Lee the filmmaker. But in answer to your question, no, not to make peace with myself and forget about “the casket.” If anything the peace I’m seeking is much bigger than peace with myself. Poets like Denise Levertov, William Stafford, Thomas Merton (poet and theologian), Pablo Neruda—public poets, poets’ engagement—that’s the peace I’m talking about.

You write about American wars in the Middle East. In the poem “The Current Count,” you list the casualties of the Iraq and Afghan wars: up to that point 4701 in Iraq and 1686 in
Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2013

Afghanistan. What about the more than 10,000 people who are killed annually by handguns in the United States?
I never really thought of that list of tallies as a poem, interesting. And I certainly didn’t think of it as all-inclusive—the numbers in the genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, of the Holocaust, of Rwanda and Cambodia—the list is horrifyingly long. And handguns, gun violence, a society that can’t balance the various “rights” and still keep its citizens safe, the sickness within the society that breeds the violence—as a pacifist it is hard to know what to do that would count.

You have lived in San Antonio for nearly twenty years. What is the most striking change you have witnessed here?
Watching Julian Castro at the Democratic National Convention, and filled with pride, I think the change in our sense of who we are, what we represent, and what we might become, is the biggest change.

Who is your favorite American poet and why?
William Carlos Williams. He was a doctor and a poet. His poems celebrate with clear eye and absolutely perfect ear, the words and wounds and lives of Americans, not just in mid-twentieth century America, but even now. He is the poet of all my days.

Ted Kooser said one must read one hundred poems for each poem one writes. The best I can do is twenty. Have you counted yours?
Not really, but I read poetry voraciously, and fiction, and non-fiction, and criticism. I always ask people what they’re reading. And though I understand Kooser’s sense that we learn our craft, we earn our poems in the forge of others’ words, and though I do learn from all the other poets I read and listen to, the poems are just “eye of newt” in the witch’s stew that is the set of things that make a poem for me.

Thanks to the UTSA English Department, Natasha Trethewey was in town last November, and she read from her latest book, Thrall. Is it possible to write about our past racial injustices without prejudice?
Yes, certainly. It is not possible to divest ourselves of our responsibility or our point of view. But honestly, thoughtfulness, a willingness to confront our own inner demons make it possible. We can’t deny who we are. And we can’t pretend it doesn’t make a difference. But we can seek a just society, apologize for past wrongs, find a new balance, in our lives and in our writing.

Finally, your tranquil demeanor and well-groomed beard are very striking. Do you receive many compliments for your beard? And who trims your beard?
Hardly tranquil. More compliments for the beard than the poems, but that sounds like I’m fishing. I have the barber of LaVille in the house, adept with scissors in fiber art, and along my jaw line.
Lavilla-Havelin reads his poems: http://youtu.be/bBCn_Oz0CSw

Lucia LaVilla-Havelin has been a working artist for over 30 years. Recent solo exhibitions include Fantasy Voyage, Bihl Haus Arts, April–May 2012; Hot Zone, Cactus Bra Space, November 2011; Lives of a Cell, Watson Fine Arts Center, St. Philip’s College, March 2010; begin/begin again, with Jayne Lawrence, at Galeria Ortiz Contemporary, March 2008; Natural Order, at the Art Center of Corpus Christi, November 2007; and The Three R’s: A Relearning, at the Southwest School of Art, January 2006. Her work has been featured around the U.S., most notably in Cutting Edge, Textile Arts Center, Brooklyn, New York, October 2010; Powerful & Fragile Earth, Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts, Fredericksburg, Virginia, March 2009; Environmental Visions, Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, January 2009; and reFormations: New Forms from Ancient Techniques, which traveled in Virginia and Tennessee in 2000. LaVilla-Havelin’s work has been seen in Surface Design Journal and American Craft magazine. It is included in over fifty private collections. Her newest work will be shown in Surfacing at the Carver Community Cultural Arts Center from June 1–30, 2013, along with work by Sabra Booth and Susan Oaks. Lavilla-Havelin received her Bachelor’s of Science from SUNY Brockport.

Art in the City
Fiber Art of Lucia LaVilla-Havelin
Adapted from http://lucialavillahavelin.com

Gallery Nord
The Architect: Allison B. Peery, AIA, 1924-2005

Allison Peery considered himself one of San Antonio’s few uncompromising modern architects. The exterior of the Gallery Nord building, designed by Peery, is simply dramatic with its soaring, winglike roofline balanced by an abstract design of stained glass and mosaic tiles at the main entrance. The interior, with its plentiful natural lighting, consists of three gallery areas: two on the main floor and an upper gallery reached by a curved staircase. Peery’s modernist ethos of expressed structure and his honest, coherent use of materials creates the perfect environment for exhibiting contemporary art.

Adapted from http://lucialavillahavelin.com
My Father’s Sestina
Marissa Vega
UTSA English-Creative Writing Student

My father always taught me to be aware
keep my ears open to the whispers of the birds
and hear those little words spoken
on the wind and through piles of dirt
encasing hordes of ants and a queen, lonely
breathing spiracle sighs beneath the earth

He taught me how the earth
bends and sinks where only the hawks are aware
how a man standing ankle deep in snow is lonely
but as long as he sings like the birds
and drops to his knees getting caked in dirt
he will see of what the hawk has spoken

My father didn’t always choose the right words to be spoken
And sometimes I grazed my fingers over our cardboard earth
spinning on a metal axis and smearing dirt
from under my nails, unaware
that those sounds from his neck weren’t the bird
songs that he taught me when I was feeling lonely

A white dove on a black wire, that shade of lonely
when just one word spoken
can fly from his breath like birds
scattering tornadoes over my tiny earth
world-shaken, awake and aware
learning that my father is full of dirt

Yet still I learned how to mold that dirt
and space seeds so they weren’t lonely
place tomatoes in the light where they’re aware
of the sun’s spoken
rays on morning earth
far away from the sharp beaks of the birds

Still, he taught me how to whistle to the birds
and that my garbage could turn into rich dirt
he showed me maybe not all earth
is spoiled, not every seed or dove lonely
his harsh or gentle words spoken
always let me know, made me aware

Highlights from the Department of English

Dr. Karen Dodwell, Distinguished Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, won two prizes for her presentations at the joint conference of the Conference of College Teachers of English and Texas College English Association (CCTE/TCEA) in Abilene, TX. Her paper, “Pre-Columbian Circles and Spirals in Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation by John Phillip Santos,” won the single TCEA award, and “The Self-made Family in Charlotte Bronte’s The Professor” won the CCTE British Literature award. Both papers will be published in CCTE Studies.

Dr. Wendy Barker’s poem, “Books, Bath Towels, and Beyond,” published by Southern Review in 2012, has been chosen for inclusion in Best American Poetry 2013, to be published in September 2013 by Scribner. Dr. Barker has also been awarded the Pearl LeWinn Endowed Professorship.

Doctoral Program in English an Example of Excelencia Award Finalist

For the second consecutive year, the UTSA doctoral program in English was recognized as an Example of Excelencia Award finalist in the graduate school category at a recent ceremony at the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

Excelencia in Education is one of America’s top programs in increasing degree completion among Latinos at the associate, bachelor’s, and graduate degree levels. The organization aims to accelerate higher education success for Latino students by providing data-driven analysis of the educational status of Latino students and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support their academic achievement.

UTSA’s program was nominated by Jeanne Reesman, UTSA professor and graduate adviser of record, and Norma Cantu, UTSA professor emeritus.

For more of this story, see http://www.utsa.edu/today/2012/10/excelencia.html.
Two Poems by Wendy Barker

Trauma 1

(Jorge Macchi, 2004-5, cut paper map and cotton thread)

Trouble is blank can’t get there

from
to is missing not even

names of streets here

these threads dangle twist

where something once was

better not think about those

black threads tangle

cross you up

Nothing: Pictograms

Snail shells are zeroes.
The tongue has moved on.
An unlicked house holds
little air or
lumps of sand.

Lean as an ancient
hunger, the ash-colored
Buddha sits firm as
ferns unbend,
bearing wind.

Skin on my old hands:
reptilian, snake-like, as if with
one slither, I could slip right through.

Wendy Barker is poet-in-residence and a professor of English at UTSA. She is the author of Nothing Between Us: The Berkeley Years, a novel in prose poems (Del SolPress, 2009), and numerous collections of poetry, including Poems from Paradise (2005), Way of Whiteness (2000), Let the Ice Speak (1991), and Winter Chickens (1990), as well as three chapbooks, Eve Remembers (1996), Between Frames (2006), and Things of the Weather (2009).
A native of South Texas, Laurie Ann Guerrero is the author of *Babies under the Skin*, which won the 2008 Panhandler Publishing Chapbook Award. Her poetry and criticism have appeared in a number of journals. She teaches for the M.F.A. Program at the University of Texas at El Paso, at the University of the Incarnate Word, and at Palo Alto College in San Antonio, Texas. Guerrero’s poems have been published in local and national literary magazines and anthologies.

The book begins with a long article of acknowledgment and a short introduction that reflects her progress in writing good poetry. In the first poem, “Preparing the Tongue,” she starkly reveals her intention and writes, “In my hands, it’s cold and knowing as bone.” The pages are decorated with poems in beautiful formats that take the reader through her life, from the age of four to the present. South Texas and San Antonio images abound. Through-out the book, Guerrero uses tongue as a metaphor that signifies language, speech, and her own culture, be it the literal beef dish, or figuratively, the cold sweat of a child’s fevered sleep. In the poem “Early Words for My Son,” she writes, “You will probably make sense of it all some Wednesday / afternoon as you sit with your wife and daughter…” and finishes with this moving line: “I just couldn’t do it with my arms …, and all I’ve ever known / is to carry you in my teeth.” She says she is a woman, a mother who raised her offspring like a lioness: the lullaby, poetry.

In addition to the 2013 Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize, Guerrero is also the winner of the 2012 Award for Teaching and Leadership Excellence from Palo Alto College, a 2010 National Women’s History Month Honoree, and three-time winner of the Rosemary Thomas Poetry Prize from Smith College.

**Preparing the Tongue**

*Laurie Ann Guerrero*

from *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying*

In my hands, it’s cold and knowing as bone. Shrouded in plastic, I unwind its gauze, mummy-like, rub my wrist blue against the cactus of its buds. Were it still cradled inside the clammy cow mouth, I should want to enchant it: let it taste the oil in my skin, lick the lash of my eye. What I do instead is lacerate the frozen muscle, tear the brick thick cud conductor in half to fit a ceramic red pot. Its cry reaches me from some heap of butchered heads as I hack away like an axe murderer. I choke down the stink of its heated moo, make carnage of my own mouth, swallow the blood, add garlic.

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“A native of South Texas, Laurie Ann Guerrero is the author of *Babies under the Skin*, which won the 2008 Panhandler Publishing Chapbook Award. Her poetry and criticism have appeared in a number of journals. She teaches for the M.F.A. Program at the University of Texas at El Paso, at the University of the Incarnate Word, and at Palo Alto College in San Antonio, Texas. Guerrero’s poems have been published in local and national literary magazines and anthologies.”

The book begins with a long article of acknowledgment and a short introduction that reflects her progress in writing good poetry. In the first poem, “Preparing the Tongue,” she starkly reveals her intention and writes, “In my hands, it’s cold and knowing as bone.” The pages are decorated with poems in beautiful formats that take the reader through her life, from the age of four to the present. South Texas and San Antonio images abound. Through-out the book, Guerrero uses tongue as a metaphor that signifies language, speech, and her own culture, be it the literal beef dish, or figuratively, the cold sweat of a child’s fevered sleep. In the poem “Early Words for My Son,” she writes, “You will probably make sense of it all some Wednesday / afternoon as you sit with your wife and daughter…” and finishes with this moving line: “I just couldn’t do it with my arms …, and all I’ve ever known / is to carry you in my teeth.” She says she is a woman, a mother who raised her offspring like a lioness: the lullaby, poetry.

In addition to the 2013 Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize, Guerrero is also the winner of the 2012 Award for Teaching and Leadership Excellence from Palo Alto College, a 2010 National Women’s History Month Honoree, and three-time winner of the Rosemary Thomas Poetry Prize from Smith College.

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“Preparing the Tongue

*Laurie Ann Guerrero*

from *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying*
Born and raised on San Antonio’s Southside, Laurie Ann Guerrero is the new star in the city’s literary community. Guerrero’s first full-length book of poems, *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying*, is raising eyebrows and pricking ears in literary circles everywhere (see review on p. 10). Regarding her poetry, Martín Espada said, “Guerrero writes in a language of the body, visceral, almost unbearably vivid, … attention must be paid to such a poet now and for years to come.” Guerrero’s book release was held at the Museo Alameda on Friday, March 1, and was the first in a series of planned art events in San Antonio, an event which I was thrilled to attend.

The event was filled to capacity with family, friends, her students, colleagues, and some of her literary peers. A definite sense of community, family, and pride swaddled the audience, like the devoted hands of the mothers Guerrero’s work so often praises. The evening’s speakers included TAMUSA President Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, Dr. Carmen Tafolla—the “Madrina of poetry”—and Dr. Larissa Mercado-Lopez, lecturer in Women’s Studies at UTSA. These women gave their adulation of Guerrero and spoke of the power and need for her work, while her own mother watched from the audience with undying pride. The event resonated with familiarity and affection, as if my family were telling stories of my mother. I felt pride and tears swell in my own throat as she began to speak. What makes Guerrero’s work relatable is not only that she and I grew up in the same neighborhood, or that we went to the same high school, but that her work is San Antonio: its mothers, sisters, the poor, the neighborhood corner stores, the food, *La Raza*, history. It is the voice of those who have none. From this perspective she illustrates history, pain, pride, a constant struggle for equality, and the resounding hope that lies throughout. It was a treasured evening for Guerrero, poetically, the people of South San Antonio, a celebration for us all. The following is an interview I conducted with her after the event.

**Gerard S. Robledo: So how were/are you feeling about your very own book, and its receiving the 2012 Andres Montoya Poetry prize?**

Laurie Ann Guerrero: It’s a little scary: I feel like I have stepped out of the shadows. I can be seen. One of the many lessons I learned in college was that when it is my time to speak, I’d better have something to say. So, my time is now, and that’s very empowering. So I feel very strong and very ready.

And because I know some of the work of the poets who were finalists for the prize, and I know how very, very good their work is, I feel humbled. Honored. I was a finalist for this prize in 2010, and I know firsthand that a prize for any Latino/a poet is a prize for us all. Many of the finalists called me to tell me just that. I smile a lot when I think of it. I’ve been smiling a lot lately.

**The title is *A Tongue in Mouth of the Dying*. Where does a beautiful title like that comes from?**

I wrote something about the importance of voice (tongue) for those whose experiences hadn’t been documented, and how my voice was one of many. The tongue began to represent many things after I gave the book its new name: language, voice, sex. The opening poem, “Preparing the Tongue,” is about preparing lengua for breakfast tacos, but it’s also about the fear of speaking up, of unbinding one’s tongue for the sake of speech, about pushing through uncharted territories for the fulfillment that comes after the work is done.

**Your poem, “One Man’s Name: Colonization of the Poetic,” is broken up into sections and sown throughout your book. What made you decide to do that, as opposed to a traditional consecutive sequence?**

That is a very personal poem about a very sexist and racist comment made by a grad school professor about the paternity of my children. The comment came during my first week in grad school at a brand new program. It evoked a lot of anger, a lot of fear. It made me question my decision to attend grad school, my decision to enter a field dominated by white men. But it also made me think back through my history as a Chicana woman and confirmed the need for my voice. The emotion of this event came in waves—sometimes I felt very empowered, sometimes I felt very small. I wanted the poems to come to the reader in that way.

**You graduated from two great universities on the east coast. Why come back to teach in San Antonio, back to the Southside?**

I belong here. I figured I could write or teach anywhere, but doing that work here is not only very centering, but I know that what I do in my classroom can affect my students in a much more positive way because they recognize themselves in my story—we eat at the same places, shop at the same grocery stores, went to the same high school, grew up in the same culture, same city. My grandma is their grandma and my kids are their kids. It’s very important for me to write from the Southside. It is a place of love and familiarity that makes me feel safe. It’s very centering, and that helps me write truthfully. But also, it’s a place of uncertainty—economic, educational, among other kinds. There’s a sense of loss here, too, that I can’t name yet (maybe it’s just because I’m getting older). I am pulled here. My hope is that my passion for helping folks raise their voices helps build a stronger community—that we can add a new, empowered layer to our history.

**Do you feel there is a need for poetry within the San Antonio community? If so, how does your work fit into that?**

There is so much poetry in the community! Does it get enough support? No. Is it as celebrated as it should be? No. I think the need is for opened eyes and ears. There are a lot of us in the community working on that in schools, in community centers. And, it’s not an easy job, but there’s a lot of passionate people here.

I have friends who are Latino artists, and they are immediately asked if they do “Chicano” art. Some say they feel pigeonholed into an idea of what it is to be Latino and an artist. Do you feel it is the same for Latino writers? Is it our duty to write “Chicano” poetry, or yours to write from a Chicana perspective?

I don’t “feel a need.” I have no choice but to write from my perspective. I think it’s kind of silly to ask any artists if they “do” any kind of racially informed art. I think we need new names for styles, and not have them identifiable by the ethnicity or race of the artist. What is the goal? To write from the perspective of an Indian woman? A German man? I can’t do that. I think that racial labeling comes from those who do not reside within the group they are labeling. To adopt it for ourselves can be limiting, but I do think that if I write a poem about frijolitos, it is a Chicana poem. In the same way, if I write a poem about beets, it’s a Chicana poem, because I wrote it.

**Any words of advice for writers striving to succeed, break out, get recognized? Words of wisdom?**

Don’t let anyone tell you who you are or what you’re capable of doing. Find out for yourself!
Regarding the Second Amendment
Robert Flynn

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation. Article 6: “… every State shall always keep up a well-regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutered…” Article 1, Section 8, paragraph 15 of the Constitution ratified 1789: “The Congress shall have power to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.” Section 8, paragraph 16: “The Congress shall have power to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia….” Article 2, Section 2, paragraph 1: “The president shall be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States and of the militia….”

The first uprising of citizens against the federal government, the Shays Rebellion, occurred before the Constitution was ratified. The rebels were easily defeated by state militia. Two hundred rebels were charged with treason; five were condemned to be hanged but reprieved. The Whiskey Rebellion, 1791-1794, occurred after ratification of the Constitution and the Second Amendment, 1791, and the Militia Acts of 1792. With the authority of the Constitution and the militia acts, President Washington ordered the militias to duty and took personal command of the militias to suppress insurrection.

The Militia Act of 1792, Section 1: “and in case of an insurrection in any state, against the government thereof, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States … to call forth such number of the militia … as he may judge sufficient to suppress such insurrection.” Section 2: “That whenever the laws of the United States shall be opposed or the execution thereof obstructed … it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth the militia … to cause the laws to be duly executed.”

When Gov. Faubus called up the Arkansas militia to block integration, President Eisenhower ordered the militia to national service, and the Arkansas National Guard escorted black students to schools that they had been previously blocked from entering. A second Militia Act passed in 1792 mandated, “… each and every free able-bodied white male citizen of the respective States … who is or shall be of age of eighteen years, and under the age of forty-five years … be enrolled in the militia….” That every citizen, so enrolled and notified, shall, within six months thereafter, provide himself with a good musket or firelock, a sufficient bayonet and belt, two spare flints … every citizen so enrolled, and providing himself with the arms, ammunition and accoutrements, required as aforesaid, shall hold the same exempted from all suits, distresses, executions or sales, for debt or for the payment of taxes.”

The Militia Act of 1903 granted state militia federal authority as the National Guard. The National Guard has served in every American war since the war with Mexico.

The courts had consistently found that the first part of the Second Amendment, the “militia clause,” trumped the “bear arms” clause. Both the Supreme Court and the lower courts insisted that the amendment conferred on state militias a right to bear arms— but did not give individuals a right to own or carry a weapon. In 1977 a group of committed political conservatives in the NRA pushed for a novel interpretation of the Second Amendment that ignored the Constitution, the Militia Acts, and previous readings of the Constitution. They claimed the Second Amendment gave individuals, not just “well regulated militias,” the right to bear arms. Conservative Chief Justice Warren E. Burger ridiculed the individual-rights theory of the amendment as “a fraud.”

In 2010, the activist U.S. Supreme Court reversed 142 years of precedent to extend the meaning of the 14th Amendment to prohibit states from prohibiting guns to individuals. The nationwide Constitutional protection for gun ownership came into existence in 2010 by one vote.

Iranian Americans
Underreported Diaspora
from http://www.pbssocal.org/iranianamericans

In this program, The Iranian Americans, PBS chronicles the underreported history of a group of immigrants finding refuge, overcoming adversity, and ultimately creating new lives in the United States. Even though Iran is in the news virtually every day, many Americans have little knowledge of the story of the hundreds of thousands of Iranians who live in the U.S. The special is presented by the network’s flagship station in Greater Los Angeles and Southern California, PBS SoCal.

As The Iranian Americans shows, the Iranians’ story begins more than two millennia ago in the Middle East, in a land that came to be called Persia. They built an empire that stretched from North Africa to India, from the Caspian to the Red Sea. A people of diverse ethnicities and faiths, they developed rich traditions that endured centuries of migrations and conquests. In the second half of the twentieth century, the nation, now known as Iran, was racked by political and religious upheaval, leading ultimately to revolution. In 1979, the revolution thrust Ayatollah Khomeini into power, beginning an era when dissent was not tolerated. Tens of thousands of Iranians left their homeland for the United States, a country they would come to call home. For more info, visit: http://www.pbssocal.org/iranianamericans. Or watch the video: http://youtu.be/rH_GWpaV94Q.

Persian New Year

In Iranian calendars the New Year, called Nowruz, begins on the first day of spring. It is celebrated on the day of the Northern vernal equinox, which usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is observed. As well as being a Zoroastrian holiday and having significance among the Zoroastrian ancestors of modern Iranians, this day is also celebrated in parts of the South Asian subcontinent as the new year. The moment the sun crosses the celestial equator, equalizing night and day, is calculated exactly every year, and Iranian families gather to observe the rituals. For more info, please visit: www http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nowruz.
Art in the City
San Antonio Symphony
http://www.sasymphony.org

2013-2014 Season Announced

Music Director Sebastian Lang-Lessing has announced the San Antonio Symphony’s 74th season, which runs from October 2013 to June 2014 and will feature 28 Classics concerts, 12 POPS concerts, a special concert celebrating the 75th anniversary of the San Antonio Symphony’s first performance, and a host of education and outreach programs. The 2013-2014 season is Maestro Lang-Lessing’s fourth season as music director. “Following our highly successful Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Brahms Festivals, we will feature the music of Dvořák in a winter festival in January and February 2014. Over the course of five weeks, the Symphony will perform five of Dvořák’s best-loved symphonies, his three major concertos, and, in a special collaboration with The Opera San Antonio, a concert version of Dvořák’s opera masterpiece, Rusalka,” said Lang-Lessing.

Subscribers may purchase all fourteen programs in the fourteen-concert Masterclassics series or seven concerts in the Ovation or Applause series. For more information, call the Symphony Box Office at (210) 554-1010.

San Antonio Museum of Art
http://www.samuseum.org/exhibitions

Artists of SAMOMA from the SAMA Collection
February 9–May 26, 2013

SA Museum of Art brings art history to light. Artists of SAMOMA from the SAMA Collection features 37 multiples, limited-edition prints created by SAMOMA artists in 1979. The exhibition also includes pieces by artists who exhibited at SAMOMA and subsequently had their work collected by SAMA: Judy Bankhead, Rolando Briseño, Larry Graeber, Jim Harter, Marilyn Lanfear, Henry Stein, Kathy Vargas, Robert Willson, and Gene Elder, whose Time Capsule containing works by 100 San Antonio artists and writers remains sealed within SAMA’s walls until the Museum’s 2181 Bicentennial.

The Jameel Prize: Art Inspired by the Islamic Tradition
May 24 through August 11, 2013

The Jameel Prize, inaugurated in 2009, is an international art prize for contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic traditions of art, craft, and design. The initiative was launched by the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) to explore the cultural dialogue between the Islamic artistic tradition and contemporary practice, and to contribute to a broader debate about Islamic culture.

Leading curators, designers, artists, and cultural figures around the world were invited to nominate candidates. Nearly 200 submissions were received, and from these, a panel of judges chose a shortlist of ten artists and designers. The ten finalists were invited to submit work for an exhibition at the V&A that was held in the summer of 2011.

Algerian-born artist Rachid Koraichi received the second Jameel Prize, worth £25,000, for his selection of embroidered cloth banners from the series, Les Maîtres Invisibles (2008). Also included in this exhibition are works that range from sculptural installations and digital collages to mirror mosaic and textiles.

The Jameel Prize is conducted in partnership with Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives (ALJCI). The prize was conceived after the redesign and redisplay of the V&A’s Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, which opened in July 2006. The prize is awarded every two years. The patron of the Jameel Prize is Zaha Hadid, widely regarded as one of the world’s most innovative architects.

The exhibition is organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in partnership with Abdul Latif Community Initiatives.

GAGA Show on the Road
Gentileschi Artemisia Gallery Association

The ExquiSITE Quilt, a curated show of 82 works by GAGA members, will open at UTHSC-SA this April. Since January, this show had been on exhibit at the San Antonio Art Institute on IH-10, where it received appreciative notices. In fall the ExquiSITE Quilt will move to Lubbock.

Each artist approached the theme of flora and fauna in her own medium, which ranged from watercolor, oil, and acrylics, to glass, paper, and wood sculpture to works in cloth. The challenge was to express the artist’s vision on a one foot square raised panel of natural wood. At the time of the show’s installation, these panels were “quilted” together under the guidance of several art professors into square assemblages of nine works (three high by three wide). Each “quilt” in turn represents a unique composition of media, visualizations, color, and material.

GAGA is a group of 57 regional artists, all women, who work in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, glass, glass, jewelry, cloth, and paper. The organization’s name is a nod to Artemisia Gentileschi, an Italian painter from the Early Baroque period. Sylvia Benitez, an installation artist and instructor at the Southwest School of Art, started the group two years ago after noting that women in their 40s and older were filling her classes. “One of the organization’s goals is educating an artist population that has been underserved, and that is the mature, emerging woman artist who had given up her art dream to work or raise a family and now at 40 or 50 is finding herself with time to get back to art,” Benitez said. “And she doesn’t know how it operates. So our organization helps provide a platform or a launch pad.”

The group exhibits regularly around Texas. In addition to the ExquiSITE Quilt, recent GAGA group shows have been exhibited at the Rockport Museum on the Texas Coast and in local galleries such as Galley Nord. This year GAGA participated in Contemporary Art Month with a group show and several events at the HighWire Art Gallery in San Antonio. Visit also gentileschiaegis.wordpress.com.

Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2013 13
**Youth Poems**

**Bumpy Ride**  
*Sofia Oddo*

I began my day walking and smiling  
The air was warm inside, freezing outside  
Looking through the window  
I saw the rented car, white, large and chunky.

The car that brought us here from the airport  
and the flight from NJ, which was rough and bumpy  
still, I ate a turkey sandwich in the plane  
while Tristan watched *Home Alone 1*.

He laughed out loud but thanks to the games  
we played, the time went by fast. When  
we landed, I lost my red, red suitcase  
Tristan, his CD, and two plastic pawns.

I pulled my purple, yellow backpack  
full of magic toys, a surprise present  
full of funny tales and photos of my  
cat under the white Christmas tree.

**Dad**  
*April Ponce*  
*Krueger Middle School*

I don’t see my dad anymore,  
Maybe I should walk out the door,  
I don’t hear his voice,  
Nor any advice.  
I don’t smell his cologne.  
I feel kind of alone.  
I don’t feel his chest giving me a hug,  
I remember he would pick me up  
And just swing me around by my hands  
All across the lands  
I watched the Earth go round and round.  
I remember he would take me on his Harley  
With my arms wrapped around him.  
I feel I can’t move on through life  
Without having a father  
To walk me down the aisle  
Or give me some advice for life,  
Advice which a mother could not.

**Cinnamon**  
*Leilani Loveless*  
*Krueger Middle School*

I sit in a lonely, dusty corner.  
The bed I sleep on is tatters, for it is only tissues.  
A bed of tissues made for me many years ago.  
Wind rises, chilling me and rustling my fur.  
I have not had warmth except from the sun,  
Left alone while the warmth goes away.  
When I was young, a little girl would hold me, play with me.  
As she grew older, her nose in a book, she had no time for me.  
Now she has left me forever, moved away.  
Her parents come in here sometimes,  
Crying about the little girl that grew up.  
They still own the house, but the girl never comes back.  
The walls were once blue but now have turned gray.  
My striped fur has changed with the room.  
I once had orange fur with darker orange for stripes, but I am  
now gray.  
All of the girl’s furniture has gone,  
Replaced by new cabinets that I hide behind.  
Someday the girl will come back, but not now.  
Not yet.  
Who am I? I think I was once called Cinnamon.  
It has been so long.  
I am the toy left behind and I need  
Love  
Hope  
Care.

**Pain Rhyming Poem**  
*Caulder Stratton*  
*Krueger Middle School*

A wave crashing down on a plane  
The feeling that you will never gain  
All the bad feelings you start to hoard  
Like a hollow and empty gourd  
The world inside you, all in a mess  
A self-destruct button you have to press  
All of your dreams crushed with force  
A lightning bolt made to drive you off course  
The tears flowing from your eyes  
The yells of loved ones and their cries  
The loss of everybody’s grin  
The only feeling to never win
What’s Hidden Inside
Erika H.
Harlandale ISD Middle School Student

The darkest of night
is not a fright.
A girl has to hide what’s inside
to keep her family alive.

She keeps to herself
like a book on a shelf
waiting for someone to open
her concrete self.

On that road to desperation
wishing she could shred
that away, seeing the light
fading away.

Now she
can always be free
as long as she never
never meets me.

Puppet
Star B. C.
Harlandale ISD Middle School Student

My endless thoughts
circle around my head.
Everything gets so real
I can lose sight
of what really matters.
My life, my room
usually have no control over me,
sometimes like a puppet on a shelf,
waiting for someone to guide me.
But in this room, I can be me.
I have control of my life
in this place
I feel safe.

The Freedom of Writing
Angel Marie B.
Harlandale ISD Middle School Student

The freedom to write
A way to get your words out
Expressive and cool

The Meadow
Gabrielle C.
Harlandale ISD Middle School Student

The meadow is what I call my happy place.
There are eye-catching flowers everywhere.
Like a big crayon box filled with lively colors.
In the middle, there is a large tree.
The only tree.
It has recently bloomed with small, white flowers like snow.
This meadow is my happy place.
The place I feel free.

No sé cómo se llama mi amor
Josué G., Guatemala, 17 años

Oh, Es Micaela
Mi Cae La
La Mi Cae
Cae La Mi

Amor que vive
bajo del cielo y que
me llenó de alegría
y de todo su amor.
Mi angelita mía, tú
eres mi bella rosa
que todos los días
veo en mi jardín y
que nunca sale de
mi jardín.

Lo que sufre un ilegal
Rodolfo E. C. T., Guatemala

Dejé familia y amigos y salí
con la ilusión de hacer realidad mi
sueño en el que yo andaba
cuando salí de mi casa, aunque con
lágrimas en mis ojos pero con
aquella ilusión de que mis sueños iban
a ser cumplidos y, bien, así uno empieza
a sufrir un poco menos que
mi tío Nelso Toj. Monté el tren en in día
muy caliente y en él una noche con mucho frío,
pero por hacer realidad mi sueño, soporté.
Luego, en el desierto,
aunque aguas verdes yo bebi,
me agarraron y sentí desmayar,
pero nunca nos dimos por vencidos
hasta lograr por lo que hemos sufridos.
¡Que Vivan Los Toj y La Raza Ilegal!
Select Poems

Song for Daybreak
Sheila Black
for my daughter, Annabelle

Attend to the shimmering, I would tell her.
So often we did not. On the days when disaster looms in the sick
cough of a father, slice three tomatoes on a diagonal, salt them
well,
tear the basil in pieces for to cut it with metal ruins the flavor.
The plates will clatter. The table, swiped with a dirty rag, will
shine its gold-wood whorl. I promise this. The moment will
-crack like a nut, and we will sit like the family in the fairy tale to
whom everything dreadful that could have befallen has passed
over like stormcloud— cruel stepmother, father who devours his
own child, but see—here: the boy is singing in the trees, the
bread is warm, the butter
has just been churned in the cool of morning. You know what
this feels like—the opening of day like a coin in water, fresh
metal taste on
your tongue, a little terrible like dark wine, and the black joy
leaping like the stag in the live wood, antlers trembling, and you
have no
choice, you have no choice, but to fling
yourself towards it.

For You, Not for Me
Angela Consolo Mankiewicz

For you, not for me, this loss of hope
when adulthood overtakes
like an encroaching fog, a blight
on innocence a la Blake. Maybe.
Probably not as poetic as Blake.
But blighting all the same.

Not that your boyhood was a barefoot,
grass-chewing romp, un-lonely and sure,
but you did have mother-made sandwiches
and Sunday walks with your father,
walks with talking;

Still, I sympathize, even shudder for you
vying for third shift jobs to put money down
on classroom space, followed by pay-ups
and paybacks, then the tyranny of paychecks
to bankroll a cell of selves you will know little about
and who will know little about you

I sympathize most with your entrapment
but I shudder with awe that you would have to lose
what was my only hope: an end to a childhood
I suspected I was living, an end to these limbs
swelling inside me, a thickening of the tongue,
the aftertaste of sand.

Incident at the Ruffled Rooster Cantina
Joseph Trombatore

I
Morning had passed
A hot mid-August moment
-driving
as the horizon’s
heat rose in waves from the tarmac

II
Lizards lapped away at the light of leaves

III
A distant jet seemed suspended
an abandoned balloon
in a tree

IV
I craved the luxury of a cold beer
the quiet corner of a cantina

V
Signposts were scarce
eyes that scanned the scenery
had become a ravenous crow

VI
My feathers gleamed

VII
In search of movement
a rusty sign, a skin & bone dog
a shack dozing beneath an oak

VIII
The screen door pulled me in
through obliging holes
The smile of a stranger
leaning over the jukebox

IX
With a handful of coins
I approached the bar
Some landed flat
others spun toward the edge

X
At one end two men
were arm wrestling
at the other
an open casket
one lit candle
Sanctuary
Janet Scott McDaniel

In peaceful slumber,
I drift as shadows cross the moon.
A thief, silent in the night, the words
tiptoe into my dreams stealing my security;
demons dancing on fire;
an assassin’s bullet.

Is it just an owl’s cry that flies soft upon the night wind?
Or a coyote’s howl transforming
into a low gibbering moan wailing the agonies of the damned?
Realization comes with the dawn
…it is my own.

From room to room silence echoes as I softly tread
into darker nights of the soul; memories becoming
elusive shadows; visions fading to whispers in misty eyes.

At the window I stand with morning sun upon my face,
 warming me with promise. I feel the distant drumbeats,
 my heart beating within my chest.
I raise my eyes as with a rush of wings,
birds take to flight and I see
…the sky did not fall.

She Won’t Hug Me Until I Jump My Hoops
Kara Holcomb

I keep trying
Sisyphean tasks
to make me worthy. Find all
those meanings
you dribbled on the side of my chin
like the kisses you gave only when I
was good. My muse teeters between
gravel and glass, me and mother.
I can hear her whispers, grinding
through my membranes
my brain feverish
when mother’s expectations
are pumping in my mind like
Coke’s carbonation, burning my eyes.

Welcome all to this thing called life.
Where ever-present walking endorsements
Stroll to your doorstep saying,
“Here take this, take that.
This will make you fit in.
This will make you less fat.”
Where you are pulled here and there,
By people without the slightest care,
While you, you just want a gasp of air.
Where contradictions fill the fiction
Of all this man-made creation.
You are thrown
Into an uncontrollable centrifugal motion.
This place is complicated,
but not the Avril Lavigne “Complicated.”
This kind of complicated
Is more the Charlie Sheen kind of complicated.
Through all this complication
I have devised a simple conclusion,
A motto for the journey to quell the confusion:
Do what you love, do what makes you glad.
So when you become older and are an old dad,
You can look to your offspring singing
“See what I’ve done and see who I am”
Instead of yelling as a cantankerous old man.
So I urge you to find your love, find your passion
And when you cross that finish line, lights flashing.
You will know that your life wasn’t trash and
You will be happy.

When My Bones Are White as Ash
Rene Villanueva

When my bones are white as ash
and my eyes are darkened caves
to probe with distant fingers,
when gloves catalogue times I gave
to every wall, before being boxed
and assigned my final name
adding and adding my volume
to the heavenly silent library,
remember these numbers laughed
through breaks and pain
account for the frivolous soft-tissue
that fades so fast ‘cause
that is where we best hold it...
I hope they won’t
but it’s easy to neglect the history of laughter.
Seeds of Freedom in a Barren Soil
Amanullah Khan

Tongues are tied but allowed to breathe
To live in silence, soul will seethe
Dragon’s rule, humanity’s bane
Freedom lies shackled in a chain

Phantom borders drawn in the sand
Unseen barbs encircle the land
Ruse of a dragnet in the air
Doves are being caught unaware

River of Aleppo—bloodstains
The land of prophets, evil reigns
Man is making a salmon’s leap
Spawning freedom future will reap

Lambs are taking valiant stand
Painful wait for a helping hand

January in San Antonio
Lauren Walthour

Thick plumes paint clouds rose-orange
As trees explode to fertilize the setting sun.

For eleven months, we cut and burn them;
For one month, we kneel in surrender.

In history, a few dotted narrow creek beds
Nestled between hillside ridges.
Today, they surround the city, dominate our view.

In legend, golden birds strip the bark to build nests,
Goats eat it as aphrodisiac.

Ashe juniper separates the pure from the sinners,
Wise from the fools, yet both monks and
Prisoners wear saffron stigma.

Like the dried pollen smearing my windshield
On a January morning in San Antonio.

Invincible
Barbara Crooker
after a photograph by Lydia Panas

So, you want to take my picture? I don’t care. I’m here
with my cousins; Jessie in the center is the one you focus
on, Natalie and Amber on either side. They’re perfect
and they know it, skinny as the trees behind us, faces
smooth as the pond beyond. I’m the one you don’t
notice, in the left of the frame, the one with the glasses,
a little out of focus. The camera cuts me off the way
these girls edge me out, the way they close their circle
without me. Sure, they’re older, have boyfriends,
drive cars. I’m in their shadow, the penumbra
of their moony light. The silver teeth of Jessie’s
zipper, a train track straight out of town.

The Probation Officer
Larry D. Thomas

My client’s conditions of probation
are the conditions of my employment.

Each morning when I shave, peering
into my mirror, I see the unforgiving
eyes of the judge. I have even noticed
his distinctive baritone jarring the timbre

of my voice. I am charged with the dual
absurdity of helping my client even as I
monitor his compliance with the caprices
and propensities of the judge. I reward

my client’s candor by quoting him
in a violation report, reminding him

that in my presence he was also
in the judge’s. And when he stands

before the bar in a revocation hearing,
he sears me, with only his gaze,

for the non-statutory crime of betrayal,
already planning his revenge to commence

the day he leaves prison, rehabilitated.

Larry D. Thomas was the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate.
Editors’ Poems

Blue Bird

Lou Taylor
A Reflection on the Art of Griffin Taylor

Blue bird sits on a branch
Surrounded by pink flowers

I wonder what he
Is thinking

Soon he will fly away
But now I see each feather

When he spreads his wings
And soars to the sky

I will cherish the time
He sat on the branch

And shared this moment with me.

En Buenos Vientos

Gerard S. Robledo

En buenos vientos vienen
gritos, horns, drums, and mesquite pouring
over roof tops into my yard. Warm April breeze scoots
across my porch swinging heavy laundry. T-shirt bottoms flutter
like folklorico dancer’s skirts, in unison to the conjunto music
billowing from Iglesia San Patricio, a street away. Roasted corn
cups,
giant turkey legs, and Lite beer sit at the edge of my tongue. My daughter twirls to the music of the distant festival,
just loud enough to feel comforting. Dizzy with excitement,

reminiscent of the joy that came
with every festival or carnival—I smile. Building blocks in hand,

she stomps her chancla on the old wooden porch,
pausing, she declares,

“Papi, I want arroz! ...Por favor?”

“Bueno, vamos adentro.”

Her toddler feet lead me back
to parenthood to make arroz y frijoles...

A Young Doctor

Carol Coffee Reposa
For Ruth

She’ll need wings on her feet,
The speed of serpents
And a wand in her hand
Like Mercury
To walk the thousand miles
That soon will fill her life.

She’ll wear a white coat now,
Her name emblazoned on the pocket
Like a talisman.
A stethoscope will dangle
From her neck
Like a fifth appendage

As she hears the muffled heartbeats
Swoosh of the mother seas
First wails
And final syllables
Drifting through a galaxy
Of rooms,

Her ears always alert
For the pager in the night.
Her hands will coax new life
From aching portals
And she’ll learn to say
“Es un niño. Todo está bien”

Twenty times a week.
A benevolent Hydra
She’ll grow new lives
With every year,
Ulysses in the operating room,
A part of everything she meets:

The luminous newborn
An octogenarian with a broken hip
Another with a leaky mitral valve
Someone’s rasping breath
But always
At the center

She will live in miracles unnamed
Like the imperial koi
Floating silently in their pool
Beneath a willow tree
Each green leaf
Still above green water.

Published in Shimmer (forthcoming from Ink Brush Press)
La Felicidad
Manuel Acuña

Un cielo azul de estrellas brillando en la inmensidad; un pájaro enamorado cantando en el florestal; por ambiente los aromas del jardín y el azahar; junto a nosotros el agua brotando del manantial nuestros corazones cerca, nuestros labios mucho más, tú levantándote al cielo y yo siguiéndote allá, ese es el amor mi vida, ¡Esa es la felicidad!…

Cruza con las mismas alas los mundos de lo ideal; apurar todos los goces, y todo el bien apurar; de lo sueños y la dicha volver a la realidad, despertando entre las flores de un césped primaveral; los dos mirándonos mucho, los dos besándonos más, ese es el amor, mi vida, ¡Esa es la felicidad…!

En Paz
Amado Nervo

Muy cerca de mi ocaso, yo te bendigo, vida, porque nunca me diste ni esperanza fallida, ni trabajos injustos, ni pena inmerecida; porque veo al final de mi rudo camino que yo fui el arquitecto de mi propio destino; que si extraje las mieles o la hiel de las cosas, fue porque en ellas puse hiel o mieles sabrosas: cuando planté rosales, coseché siempre rosas.

...Cierto, a mis lozanías va a seguir el invierno: ¡mas tú no me dijiste que mayo fuese eterno!

Hallé sin duda largas las noches de mis penas; mas no me prometiste tan sólo noches buenas; y en cambio tuve algunas santamente serenas...

Amé, fui amado, el sol acarició mi faz. ¡Vida, nada me debes! ¡Vida, estamos en paz!

Happiness
Manuel Acuña / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

A blue sky of stars radiates in the immensity; a bird in love singing in the lush grove; for the ambient aromas of the garden and orange blossom; the water next to us flowing out from the spring, our hearts close, our lips even closer, you rising to heaven and I following you there, that is love, my life, That’s happiness!

The worlds of the ideal cross with the same wings; hasten all joy, and all the good will surge; from dreams and happiness we’ll return to reality, waking among the flowers of a spring garden; the two gazing on us, the two kissing us, that is love, my life, That’s happiness!

At Peace
Amado Nervo / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

As sunset nears I bless you, life, because you never gave me false hope, unfair work, nor undeserved punishment;

because I see at the end of my rough road that I was the architect of my own destiny;

if I extracted the honey or the gall of things, it was because I put delicious gall or luscious honey in them: When I planted roses, I always harvested roses.

...True, my youthfulness will continue on into winter: but you did not tell me that May is eternal!

I have without a doubt found long nights of sorrow; but I was not promised only good nights; and on the other hand I had some Holy peace as well...

I loved, was loved, the Sun caressed my features. Life, you owe me nothing! Life, we are at peace!
Nachts wenn der Regen  
*Hejo Müller*

Nachts
wenn der Regen
mir Nachricht trommelt
von dir—

Wonach
soll ich mich
richten?

Du bist weit.

Dein Kleid
hüllt mich
nicht mehr ein.

Es ist kalt.

---

**Eulogy**  
*James Brandenburg*

Poachers massacre
mammoth beasts for ivory
their sanctuary in Africa
peeled away
roads and runways encroach
the jungle rummaged
rampages of greed
elephants lie dead
tusks ripped out

Ivory figurines on
Chinese shelves reflect
extinction of a species
rotting carcasses everywhere
African elephants
lower their heads
in mourning
rub their trunks
across squiggles arrayed in dust
where tusks once pierced the earth
they knew.

---

**I Thought That You’d Say Something**  
*Tatjana Debeljacki*

I do not have the last wish
Lover is the substitute for the real name
Idiot, genius
I ask myself
What kind of child would it be
Made by your seed?
There is nothing to be said
I believed in belief
Mute prayer of confession

---

At Night When It Rains  
*Hejo Müller / translated by James Brandenburg*

At night
when it rains,
drumming me rhythms
from afar—

Whom
shall I depend on,
my love?

You are so far away.

Your tenderness
not clothing me
anymore.

I am so cold.

---

**Why I Work**  
*David Taylor*

The first cool morning this November was chill.
As I closed the door, a Checkered White butterfly from a fall brood,
late in the season for its kind, landed, perched on the bee balm,
which was fading from green and purple to brown.

I had to wear my denim jacket today
but made sure I had sandals on too:
It’s the way you know fall is coming,
I said to my daughter who complains of cold mornings.

She tells me
I don’t like school
as she reads another novel on the way,
telling me she must wear her glasses today as eye protection.
We’re working with acid, she grins.

Sometimes I think I’m poorly made,
bent oddly somehow in the smithing,
a brushstroke or two off in the portrait,
What the one counselor called, Off a bit.

Colors, cold, species in all their broods,
green leaves curling to a brown winter,
the gray-speckled, white wings against the tarnished purple,
a sky and a passing second to remind me
of why I work,
the best of mornings.
Select Poems

Emergency Hospital Visit
Richard Ferguson

In the midnight stairwell with its
Dank, musty, parking garage smell
And empty echoes
I struggle away from sleep’s grip
And the warm powdery smell of your embrace.
The harsh flights
Ever widen the divide
Between pleasure and pain

Horsepital
Christine Chiosi
Children’s Hospital, Philadelphia

Day to night. Night to day—
Nay! neigh, whinny, whiney,
tiny infant girl in rocking bassinet.
Galloping, in bursts, along a path.
Black sutures stitch her fontanel,
pockmarking over boggy scalp.
Like sticks and pinpoint hoof prints,
etched beside pale river Schuylkill.

Bareback, on freckled horse, she
hurtes over shadows in the mud.
Mirrored moonlight swells and ebbs
inside her crib, in arbitrary spells.
Brackish waters surge, then flood.
Threatening to steal a daughter,
before dawn. Prowling around,
like horse thieves in the night,

While sleep-starved parents bribe
whatever god. Pray and plead.
Begging every current to recede!
But the lathered, panting creature
only rears and darts. Sprinting
ever further from their presence.
Then, stops. And lowering its neck,
inhalas a soothing gulp of heaven.

A Modern Writer’s Dilemma
Michael Power

I am a tailless mouse in a Googleheim Museum
of cold and empty computer screens, suffering
from mega-bite block and gigs of ghouls, unable
to find my new soul in the new man-made machines
invented and marketed by the new gods of Baal.

Faith
Geri Radacsi

Curse you Burpee,
Your catalog of silken mirages
seduced me with hollyhocks.
“Lush, deepest maroon,” you promised.
I bought it, all that February foolery.
May your photographer’s auto-focus zoom
go Ker-boom! May your printer’s ink smear
avocado into strawberry
for keeping me in suspense two full years
as I beat off beetles
then marveled as regal staffs ascended.

Curse that first flower’s opening up,
not port wine—but black.
No wicked child was ever punished
with anthracite so dense.
No adult was more transmogrified
one afternoon when sunlight struck:
solid, square, sure.
And those blooms—rubicund—as if astonished
by God’s fire, rose full-blooded.
Wagging tongues, dusted fine sugar,
stuck out at me.

The Second Coming
William Butler Yeats

Reprinted here in memory of Chinua Achebe (see p. 30)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?
... And This Is Why the Caged Bird Sings  
_Umm-e-Aiman Vejlani_  
Flitting about in a golden cage,  
She’s pale as the first flake of snow,  
Unseen and untainted,  
For the world she’s a jailbird,  
She sings ‘cause she knows,  
Her source of admiration is  
By being encaged  
The sky outside is vast not new,  
Her wings have worn off their feathers,  
She sings out of content,  
Drawing people to her pretty cage,  
Her shadow she protects  
By being confined  
The sky outside is not new for her,  
She will fall prey to none.

Attraction  
_V. Gioconda Costello_  
 responding to Attraction, by artist  
_Diane Sandlin (above)_

Round  
Spherical  
gravitates  
to Angular  
Black and White  
embraced by  
Blue and Red  
opposites  
enveloped into  
One

Dreaming in Noir  
_Chapter Six_  
_Fernando Esteban Flores_  
Anything can find its way into a poem  
If you just wait—  
Texas buzzard tall as a small child  
Standing along road kill  
Helter-skelter squirrel  
Zigzagging the chancy road  
Late butterfly beboppin’  
In October’s cool shade  
Soul stretched saxophone wails  
A bluesy mix of Europa  
The jazz sizzles  
Like pork fat on a grill  
Feels too good  
While American forces outfox  
Al-Qaeda land mines on Afghan roads  
Mexican drug lords massacre  
More victims than they remember  
Ishmael reviles Israel  
Across the Middle East  
Night a silver chalice offering  
A wafer moon to make the peace  
There are no rules  
You breathe  
You wait  
You write

Connections  
_Jan Seale_  
Why oh why do I think of Margaret  
when I wash my face? Why does George,  
who died not long ago,  
come to mind when I use the calculator?  
Janis is a corn casserole.  
Elizabeth helps walk the dog.  
You get the picture.  
I once thought I was moving toward  
certifiable, a few more free associations  
and I’d be taken, but kindly,  
to the looney farm. Now I’m fine,  
since I learned from a lesson on the brain  
how the ends of synapses may go visiting,  
whip their tentacles about a memory  
lurking in another part of the brain.  
It’s only a game, to see who belongs to what.  
Snoopers. Imposters. Couplings.  
Ridiculous marryings.

_Jan Seale is the current Texas Poet Laureate, appointed in 2012._

Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2013  
23
In Memoriam Palmer Hall
Voices Editors
adapted from http://www.stmarytx.edu/news

On Saturday, 9 February 2013, San Antonio lost a well-respected and beloved author. Henry Palmer Hall passed away at five o’clock in the dark morning hours, while his wife, Susan Hall, was reading poetry at his bedside. The St. Mary’s University community, poets and writers of San Antonio, Pecan Grove Press authors, Wings Press, and Voices de la Luna staff and editors mourned the loss by attending the services, meditating, or writing poems in his honor.

H. Palmer Hall, Ph.D., was a longtime director of St. Mary’s University’s Louis J. Blume Library. He first joined the University in 1976 as a bibliographer and reference librarian and was named director in 1980. During his decades as director, Hall led the remarkable transformation of the library as advances in technology changed the way libraries function. Just last fall, the University dedicated the new Charles L. Cotrell Learning Commons, which came from Hall’s longtime vision for the space. Hall, a tenured faculty member, taught classes in creative writing and poetry in the Department of English. He was the author of eleven books, including Into the Thicket, The Big Thicket: Requiem and Redemption, and Foreign and Domestic. His work has appeared in various literary magazines, including North American Review, The Texas Review, The Texas Observer, The Florida Review, and many others.

In 2008, he was honored with the Art of Peace Award from the University’s President’s Peace Commission, and in January 2013, he received the Marianist Heritage Award for his contributions to and support of the Catholic and Marianist traditions of St. Mary’s. In 2005, he was elected to membership in the Texas Institute of Letters. Hall’s collection of thirty-six elegies and six interludes, which he wrote during the difficult months of his battle with lung cancer, reflect his deep devotion to literature and the sanctity of life. Voices de la Luna is honored to continue publishing these serialized elegies in upcoming issues and to support the publication of the collection by Pecan Grove Press, Luis Cortez, Managing Editor.

Elegy 9
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 good-bye. I drive home.

Elegy 10
So, I’m writing elegies and taking liberties with so many conventions:
No enlightenment at the end, no nymphs and shepherds dancing along
the way. That’s okay—the failure in freedom of the last and this century.

I do have a very sick man at the middle of it all and his remembrances
of his father and mother, a brutal war he survived, marched against,
with people he cared for among the indigenous peoples and his own.

He spoke the language—mostly—did you know? He learned from Le-Linh
that “nha toi” means both “my house” and “my family.”
Like here, in a way, though we don’t often think of it: “The House of Usher,”
“the House of Windsor.”

As [He] Lay Dying he thought of those things:
of the intertwining patterns
of southern literature, of his own house, though no one really called it that:
England to Virginia in 1632, then by odd paths to Georgia, Florida, Texas

Elegy 11
for Jeff

And when hope is gone, there is nothing left.
—lines scribbled in an old copy of Explaining the Psalms

At the club, some DJ spins music I have never heard no patter like radio jocks only music blending into

more music another platter, vinyl, like in the old days. But each disk has four cuts. You get them at Underground

Sound for ten bucks, new stuff, not known everywhere. The DJ has a hat on the floor in front of each speaker,

no pay, only just rewards for a righteous night. Everyone is dropping, smoking, moving to the beat of a deep bass line.
Out on U.S. 69, a car veers deliberately from the road, turns with screeching tires already almost smoking, eighty miles an hour, slams into an embankment. A late night autopsy shows Coke, X, a trace of heroin.

And in his apartment, they find a note: “It really wasn’t worth the price. Be cool. Don’t follow me. Perhaps you’ll find whatever...nice” and it ends as it has always ended: no solution, no reasons, just death on a late night highway.

3 a.m. and the club is smoky, the music drives deep, hitting the same note, reverb, slashing across the floor, sampling of this and that, whatever sends young men and women down into all that nothing they can always and only see.

Elegy 12
A Sestina for Anthony

A new car, top down, bright sun, Anthony/me, reckless/freckless drove through the South. Top up when rains came, parked where we wanted, we bathed in clean Gulf water, toured the Mississippi coast, stately homes—so long ago, decades before the oil came. You loved the pure white sand when we came to Destin, to Fort Walton. Remember, Anthony, chopping firewood at my grandmother’s home at Wakulla Beach, Florida? Deep in the Old South, you and I took long swims, splashed in winter water, loved the smell of pine wood burning. We drove to Miami, stared silently at the ocean. We walked where we could on South Beach, came to walled-off sand, pushed through bothered water. When the waves washed our feet, Anthony, you yelped, sang “That’s what I love about the South.” And then said, “Don’t go to Vietnam, come 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.

Eulogy of Survival
Josie Mixon

I painted a landscape of my life
Darkness prevailed from every corner
A rainbow glows peeking in through a crack
In my darkened sky
From a place
Furthest from my memory
Blinding the eyes who put me there
A prism of light reflects
In the eye of the scope
Vintage dreams are brought to life
Trading places with regret
A eulogy of my past has been read
Placed upon the wings of a phoenix
Memories that will not be missed
Lanterns glow in darkness
Bringing hope to the table of survival
Despair written off in not-so-rhyming words
Loosening the tongue of vengeance
Awarding a certificate of hope and desire
And last but not least
Finally making me
Ordinary

We Have Scars
Janie Alonso

We have scars
That can’t be seen.
Hidden underneath
Skin
Heart
When we peel away layers of hurt, shame,
Revealing our true selves,
we are seen as things underneath an overturned rock.
We are exiles,
Avoided by people
Who cover their eyes,
Wishing us away.
Our scars are badges of honor.
We have survived, persevered
And we are stronger than we ever thought possible.
We will not go back under a rock.
See our scars
Don’t turn away
See us.

The Price We Pay
Hector Lopez

He fired and the man fell, but someone else died.
Old Glory waved in the wind.
Seven rifles, three volleys, and a bugler.
Old men with deep scars arose to their feet.
Mechanical salutes ensued.
Civilians held hands over open hearts.
Some wept in their SUVs.
Everyone stopped and stood like pillars.
And God looked the other way.

The Other Side
Marisol Macias

Sinking into the dark
entwined to the void, the nothing
the emptiness
 twisting and stretching my molecules
funneling life and light—
a black hole;
and still your breath on my ear
am I conscious?
am I real?
Sometimes I mourn you
and sometimes
I feel you
a pulse
a heartbeat
that once belonged to me
and I say
I must be the dead one
a specter
an eternal echo
chained.
Am I the ghost
or is it you?
What does it matter…
it is all the same
in that
it will never be the same again.

A Seeking
Peter Holland

I move aside the veil
stepping between the worlds.
I walk into a room of masks.
The attendant looks to me,
“Whom do you seek?”
I am silent wandering, reading.
Each mask has a label
Triple Goddess, Green Man, Horned One, Death, Love.
I move on to Zeus, Odin, come to Buddha and Jesus.
Finally, I come upon a light there I open my heart.
Key to Clarity
Christian Maloles

How inebriating; empty but consoled innocence,
Kindled feelings wrapped in a wet,
Cold piece of cardboard
Pain will be pain
All is not lost, however:
It’s like opening a door that leads nowhere
And expecting it to lead somewhere
Dark clouds may form after a season of drought
But raindrops may not even fall:
They may just be passing by,
They may bring down a nasty storm.
Thoughts call to thoughts
Do not assume that a prodigal mind will,
But simply return after ages of rejection.
Accept them for who they are,
They may indeed hold the key to clarity.

Hope
Tom E.

Need is found most everywhere
But help is regrettably finite.
If help goes looking for need
It will most certainly find it.

If need goes looking for help
The search might never end,
But the burden is always bearable
So long as you have a friend.

For help will always flow
To the hollows where brambles grow,
For saints will always go
To the places where hope lies low.

To Be Me Means
Kimberly Bemrich

Hard work
Determination
Will power
Perseverance
Sacrifice
Compromise
Forgiveness of self
Understanding
Wisdom
Serenity

Lies
Jonathan Fowler

Life is good
You see me smile
My outer mood
All the while

Look at me
Don’t you care?
On my knees
Do you dare?

How are you?
I’m okay
It’s not true
Not today

An open path
Where I can go
I have wrath
It brings me low

So much I could do
It’s such a waste
Anger, I rue
The chains I taste

To Love Again
Jennifer Cervantes

Slowly opening up
seeing myself for me
who am I
strong and smart
no one can judge me
I will learn to love
me, myself, and I
loving every detail
and every flaw
becoming mesmerized
with who I am
one day I will love again

Blind Sight
Juan Victoriano

The lit bulb I hold
blocks from view
fingers grasping
through dense foliage.
Quick steps behind me.
Time to put down my eyes’ mask
and forge a new path
for the Life
just in reach.
Red and Yellow Brilliance
Sasha Guzman

That exhilarated, exciting feeling:
I never tire of it
Pain tugs on my tired heart,
But does not prevail
Happiness demands that I hail
Its red and yellow brilliance
Like homage to the gods
Fire is short-lived and can be easily extinguished
By realities of time
Put out in the depths of ashes
And evening dusk deep in the forest of my dusty heart.
Wind has corroded my fire
It comes to an extravagant end
Only to return like a bolt of
Lightning struck up by Zeus Himself
Ignited with the flint of your company.
I will keep this array of beautiful light beams steady,
And powerful as long as I can
How long will it be?
When will it come back?
Until next time…

Shadows
Maria Gabriela Madrid

Grades of shadows
surround my thoughts
Difficult decision
to go
or not to go
thus exposing myself to rage
to disapproval
to hurtful comments.
Can I divert them
and ignore them
for the sake of love
to be with my dying brother once more?

No matter the sacrifice,
I will be there
I will visit, I will visit…

Flight from Clarity
Milo Kearney

Reason shows things as they are,
with sharpness cruel as a knife.
To open the escape route door
it helps to scramble thoughts of life.

Shows are reason as sharpness things
a knife as with are cruel they
to scramble up the door route thoughts
it open helps of life escape.

Poetry & Dreams
Poetry, Dreams, and Interpretation

Sol’s Dream
Transcribed and Interpreted by James Brandenburg

Dream: Early this morning, after dark and yet before sunrise, thirst awakened me. Faint shadows of the world I belong to mixed with the dream world I had just visited. I felt as if I had pulled myself out of the deepest part of sleep, and it took me a few minutes to gather myself as I tried to retain as much as I could of the dream. I was walking down an empty street, dust and wind everywhere. My hair was long, as when I was a child, and whipping wildly. Suddenly from the sky, a pair of eyes careened toward me, and I felt the swirl of their fall as if it were myself, spinning uncontrollably. Swirls of brushed blues belonging to the skies, earthy yellows of the land, and emblazoned blacks of hopeful horizons filled the space between their gaze, between me and the eyes, and I began to get heady. Just as I was about to merge with the eyes, a voice rang like a dark resonant bell—“Is there a God?” It shook everything and pushed out the wind. Suddenly I was surrounded by many people, and they all turned around. There was a light that shone brightly, casting brilliance over the people, who stood with palms open and arms extended. The light was so bright that I could not turn to look at it. The sun? With their hands stretched toward the sky, they all chanted in unison (in a language I didn’t know I knew), “There is Allah.” But I wasn’t listening with my ears; it was a connection of tones passing through my body, traveling like electricity along my tissues and muscles, just like music. And I awoke.

Interpretation: Sol has struggled for years since she was excommunicated from her church; as in the dream, she has continuously asked herself, “Is there a God?” She misses the community of church, rituals, fellowship, security, warmth, the absolutism of the church’s teaching. And she feels wronged by the church; she feels angry and bitter. Why was she singled out for something and her male counterpart not punished? After being excommunicated, she was invited back into the church and has gone back to visit, but it is not the same. Something is missing. She realizes that what she felt in the church as a child and as a teenager will never be the same, but the unconscious addresses the issue of God and sends her an answer in the dream. “There is Allah.” There is a connection at a deeper level to God. The eyes come to her from the unconscious. There was a connection of tones passing through her body, traveling like electricity along her tissues and muscles. There is a poetic quality to her dream. It screams out at her. She can feel that numinous quality in her bones; she has connected to the spiritual. The collective experience, as wonderful as it was for Sol, cannot duplicate what the unconscious sent her in the dream, at least not anymore. Sol has to decide what she wants to do with this dream and how she wants to approach the meaning of God in the future. The unconscious has offered the reality that God is within us and that there is an individual path to discovering the meaning of God, perhaps without the church. Can she find peace with this dream interpretation?
Art Therapy

Still Standing
Frances Ford

You didn’t break me…
You didn’t kill me…
You hurt me immensely
but I’m still standing.
You ridiculed me. You shamed me.
You humiliated me. You left me
but I’m still standing.
You continue to criticize me.
You continue to judge me.
You continue to look down on me,
but I’m still standing.
You harbor resentments towards me.
You’re still angry at me.
You continue to place all the blame on me…and I’ll continue to keep on standing.
See, everything you put me through
did hurt me, it damn near broke me,
left me hopeless, shamed and alone
to the point where I couldn’t go lower;
I lost it all but it was only then that
the Good Lord took a stronger
hold of me and made me see…
that I’m still standing.

How to Be an Artist
Maripat Munley

Be still, silently breathe in my studio
wherever that studio is.
Use simple tools and colors that draw me.
Remember, making art is my spiritual practice.
Begin by releasing attachment to outcome or product
Bless eyes, hands, tools, paint and mixes.
See, touch, heal, smell everything I use.
Become one with the materials.
Remember, making art is my spiritual practice.
Immerse myself in the art process.
Let it be my prayer and my calling.
Draw and paint for the joy of it.
Be patient, able to stand back and gaze.
Remember, making art is my spiritual practice.
Get up early to walk, to meditate, to create.
Draw EVERY day.
Spend time in the company of other artists.
Learn from them.
Remember, making art is my spiritual practice.
Let my quiet breathing prayer
mirror images beckoned from that silence.
Accept these images from the depth of my soul.
Remember, making art is my spiritual practice.

Moon Walking
Maripat Munley

Walking in early morning moonlight
Casts my shadow ahead and behind
as my path twists and turns.
Praise for the little skunk family
that crosses my path.
Praise for the fox running swift and sure.
Praise for the gentle strut of the deer.

Walking in early morning moonlight
Praise for the Mexican Whistler ducks
that fly in V formation overhead.
Praise for the fecund smell that
circles me when sprinklers spray.
Praise for the sounds I hear each day:
Birds, bugs, tree frogs and family pets.

Walking in early morning moonlight
Praise for the clouds that cover the moon
making my shadow disappear.
Praise for the coyote howl
so haunting in the dark.
Praise for the gift of peace
wrapping its arms around me.

Walking in early morning moonlight
Praise for the Mystery that made us all.

The Daily Routines of Famous Writers

Have you ever wondered how successful writers find the time
to be so productive? Maria Popova has, and after reading the recen-
tly published Letters of Kurt Vonnegut, which describes the
schedule he kept while teaching at the Iowa Writer’s Workshop
at the University of Iowa, she decided to do some research to see
how other writers approached their craft. After digging through a
variety of resources, she has published her results online. To see
how Joan Didion, Ray Bradbury, Jack Kerouac, Susan Sontag,
Henry Miller, and others organized their days, visit http://www.
brainpickings.org/index.php/2012/11/20/daily-routines-writers/.
And always remember the advice of E. B. White: “A writer who
waits for ideal conditions under which to work will die without
putting a word on paper.”
The sinking of the RMS Titanic occurred on the night of 14 April through the morning of 15 April 1912 in the North Atlantic Ocean, four days into her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City. This tragic disaster has been the basis for many novels describing fictionalized events on board the ship. Many reference books about the disaster have also been written since the Titanic sank, the first of these appearing within six months of the sinking. Survivors like Second Officer Charles Lightoller and passenger Jack Thayer wrote books describing their experiences. Some, like Walter Lord, who wrote the popular A Night to Remember, did independent research and interviews to describe the events that happened on board the ship.

Morgan Robertson’s 1898 novella Futility, or the Wreck of the Titan, which was written fourteen years before RMS Titanic’s voyage, was found to have many parallels with the Titanic disaster. Robertson’s work concerned a fictional state-of-the-art ocean liner called Titan, which eventually collides with an iceberg on a calm April night while en route to New York. Most of those aboard die because of the lack of lifeboats. Both the Titan itself and the manner of its demise bear many striking similarities to the Titanic and its eventual fate, and Robertson’s novella remains in print today as an unnerving curiosity.

The sinking of the Titanic caused the deaths of 1,517 people in one of the deadliest peacetime maritime disasters in history. She was the largest ship afloat at the time of her maiden voyage. Her passengers included some of the wealthiest people in the world, such as millionaires John Jacob Astor IV, Benjamin Guggenheim, and Isidor Strauss, as well as over a thousand emigrants from Ireland, Scandinavia, and elsewhere seeking a new life in America. Due to outdated maritime safety regulations, she carried only enough lifeboats for 1,178 people, a third of her total passenger and crew capacity.

The Titanic hit an iceberg at 11:40 p.m. The glancing collision caused the Titanic’s hull plates to buckle inwards in a number of locations on her starboard side and opened five of her sixteen watertight compartments to the sea. As the ship gradually filled with water and sank, passengers and some crew members were evacuated in lifeboats. Just before 2:20 a.m., the Titanic broke up and sank bow-first with over a thousand people still on board. Those in the water died within minutes from hypothermia caused by immersion in the freezing ocean. The 710 survivors were taken aboard lifeboats from the RMS Carpathia a few hours later.

The wreck of the Titanic remains on the seabed, gradually disintegrating at a depth of 12,415 feet. The Titanic has become one of the most famous ships in history, her memory kept alive by numerous books, films, exhibits, and memorials.

At the age of 82, Nigeria’s pre-eminent English-language author and one of the best-known writers in the history of African literature, the Eagle on the Iroko himself, has passed. A lot of people are no doubt familiar with Chinua Achebe’s work through his first novel, Things Fall Apart (1958), but his literary legacy is greater than just a single work. Achebe was not only one of the greatest African writers, he was one of the greatest writers—period—of the twentieth century.

One of the extended themes in Achebe’s work, and the reason why he expressed hostility toward works like Heart of Darkness, is the fact that the international literary world did not—and does not—listen to the voices of authors among the colonized. In an interview with the Paris Review, Achebe talked about how, as a child, he read adventure novels and identified with the white heroes instead of the “savages”:

That was the way I was introduced to the danger of not having your own stories. There is that great proverb—that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It’s not one man’s job. It’s not one person’s job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—that is, the bravery, even, of the lions.

For this reason his most well-known work, Things Fall Apart, takes a much-told story—the arrival of Christian missionaries into a village—and tells it not only from a perspective sympathetic to the natives (which wasn’t unheard of in colonial literature), but from a perspective wholly aligned with the natives: that is, colonialization as experienced and understood by the colonized.

Achebe has a strange position in the canon: he’s the best-known English-language writer from the African continent, but that knowledge tends to start and stop at a single novel. There is no doubt that Things Fall Apart was a milestone work, but celebration of that milestone has, curiously, dulled interest in his other works.

Though Achebe stopped writing novels after 1987, the range of his work is daunting: short stories, poetry, essays, plays, memoirs, even children’s books. One good place to start is his collection of essays Hopes and Impediments (1988), an extended meditation on the relationship between Africa and its former colonizers, the lingering heritage of that colonization on history and culture, and the ways in which we might be able to move ahead. Achebe’s famous Conrad essay is here, as is an essay on the American writer James Baldwin. Achebe’s Baldwin essay is especially good, a plea that, though the universe and our fellow species may give us constant reason for pessimism, we cannot give in to despair.

From there, Achebe can—and should—lead us to other writers: Nobel Literature Prize winner Wole Soyinka and poet Christopher Okigbo, just to name two. These are just the best-known, most canonical writers from Nigeria: the dizzying extent of African literature spans the entire continent. If we are to learn anything from Achebe’s legacy, it’s the necessity of hearing a people speak with their own voices rather than being spoken for.

To honor his passing, though I’m sure he’d appreciate our reading and rereading his books, I think he’d be even more pleased for us to be seeking out those voices for ourselves.

Read the entire article at www.dailykos.com/story/2013/03/22/1196200/-RIP-Chinua-Achebe.
The April 12 release of 42, a film about Jackie Robinson, coincides with the start of baseball season, the time of the year that fills the hearts of fans of every team with hope that this is the year that their beloved boys of summer will bring home the World Series trophy. Whether their team is a perennial contender, like the Yankees or Cardinals, or a perennial pretender, like the Cubs or the Astros, hope reigns supreme, at least for the month of April.

About a year ago I took an informal, definitely unscientific, survey of Facebook friends concerning their favorite sports movies, because I had a hypothesis I wanted to test. It was my suspicion that the majority of people’s favorite sports movies would be baseball movies and, furthermore, that most of them would be fictional stories, whereas people’s favorite sports movies dealing with other sports would primarily be fact-based. And that’s exactly what my survey showed.

To begin with non-baseball movies, some of the favorites included Remember the Titans, We Are Marshall, Brian’s Song, Hoosiers, Glory Road, Chariots of Fire, and Cool Runnings, all of which are based on real events. Most of the baseball movies mentioned, in contrast, were pure fiction: Bull Durham, Field of Dreams, For Love of the Game (what would baseball fans do for off-season entertainment without Kevin Costner?), Major League, Damn Yankees, The Natural, The Bad News Bears, and The Sandlot. Sure, A League of Their Own was mentioned by several people, and it was loosely based on fact (there was an All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, and the Rockford Peaches was a real team), but A League of Their Own is the exception that proves the rule (who came up with that phrase? it’s completely illogical!).

When I tallied the votes, baseball movies dominated movies about other sports by more than two to one, and it got me to thinking: why do Americans like baseball movies so disproportionately? I came up with two tentative answers. First, baseball is a game that anyone can imagine themselves playing professionally. You don’t have to be really tall like most basketball players, or really fast, like most football players. Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Mickey Mantle, and, yes, Pete Rose were ordinary people who happened to be really good at the game. Second, baseball takes a lot of effort to master—there’s throwing, catching, hitting, baserunning, plus a lot of rules to learn—so anyone who’s put forth the effort and succeeded at least partially has a great appreciation for professional players.

If these answers are valid, there’s still the remaining question: why do we like fictional baseball movies so much? I think for the same reasons: ordinary people can imagine themselves as baseball players, and the effort required to learn to play baseball well lends itself to both admiration (Roy Hobbs in The Natural) and comedy (Nuke LaLoosh in Bull Durham).

Whether this analysis is accurate or not, I’ll be in line to see 42 when it comes out (another exception that … oh, never mind), and I’ll be hoping with “the hope which springs eternal in the human breast” that this will finally be the year the Rangers win it all. Check in with me in July to see if I’m still hopeful. In the meantime, play ball!!

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Baseball at the Movies
James R. Adair

The outlook wasn’t brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play, And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same, A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A stragglng few got up to go in deep despair. The rest Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast; They thought, “If only Casey could but get a whack at that— We’d put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.”

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake, And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake; So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat, For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all, And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball; And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred, There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell; It rumbled through the valley, it ratted in the dell; It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat, For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey’s manner as he stepped into his place; There was pride in Casey’s bearing and a smile lit Casey’s face. And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat, No stranger in the crowd could doubt ‘twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt; Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt; Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip, Defiance flashed in Casey’s eye, a sneer curled Casey’s lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air, And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there. Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped— “That ain’t my style,” said Casey. “Strike one!” the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar, Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore; “Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted someone on the stand; And it’s likely they’d have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey’s visage shone; He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on; He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew; But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, “Strike two!”

“Fraud!” cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered “Fraud!” But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed. They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain, And they knew that Casey wouldn’t let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey’s lip, his teeth are clenched in hate, He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate; And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go, And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey’s blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright, The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light; And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout, But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

Casey at the Bat
Ernest Lawrence Thayer
This morning I use the body of the butterfly—a Tawny Emperor, sealed in a plastic sandwich bag—to mark my favorite poem by Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day.” I’ve read it a hundred times before and will read it, if I’m lucky, a thousand times more. It ends with this question: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

The Tawny Emperor marks a destination, a place of arrival, but as T.S. Eliot said, “In my end is my beginning.” When I open the book, when I read the poem, I’ll travel outside the confines of myself, and when I return I will find that self changed.

I was six when books first took me traveling. The journey began in disappointment and ended in delight. I’d come to my first-grade classroom already knowing how to read. My parents had advertised school as a paradise of the mind. Here, they said, the world would open up for me; here I would find the answers to all my questions. But the Dick-and-Jane primers with their dull vocabulary and stunted sentences seemed to me literally unspeakable. In protest I crawled under my desk and refused to read aloud. My teacher assumed my trouble was shyness—a debilitating shyness that she hoped might be cured by social interaction and special attention. So on a Saturday morning this teacher took me to a local restaurant to see a large black woman dressed up as a mammy. The kerchief tied tight around her head made her plump cheeks pop out like pastries. She served pancakes to her small audience and smiled as one smiles who is paid to smile. “She’s the real Aunt Jemima,” my teacher said. “Just go up there and say hello.” I refused to budge.

This was 1954, Charlotte, North Carolina. I didn’t know that while we sampled Aunt Jemima’s pancakes, the U.S. Supreme Court was considering a case that would lead to the desegregation of my all-white school “with all deliberate speed”—albeit more deliberate than speedy. I didn’t know that the children who lived across town in a neighborhood called “Black Bottom” had almost certainly never held a brand new book like my despised Dick-and-Jane primer. I didn’t know enough to feel the black woman’s shame. But I did know that I would never learn anything from a teacher who would waste my Saturday morning, and hers, at a pancake demonstration.

As the result of post-pancake negotiations with my first-grade teacher I agreed to sit in my chair—not under my desk—during sessions of Dick and Jane, and my teacher agreed not to call on me to read aloud from those silly books. Shortly after the Aunt Jemima episode, my parents went away for a weekend and left me with my paternal grandmother. I called her “Dame,” pronounced the French way. This nickname sounded grand, but it was just a child’s attempt to pronounce what seemed a very complicated name, Rebecca Fitzsimons McAden.

Dame’s family story had all the elements of hackneyed Southern fiction—the lost plantation, the Depression, a suicide husband, the mansion-in-town-turned-to-rooming-house, a bitter widowhood, two spoiled sons, and a rebellious daughter (my aunt) running off with a sailor. Dame lived alone in a shabby apartment on the second floor of a rambling house in Charlotte. Her furniture was falling apart. But she had some elegant clothes left over from better days, including six pairs of kid gloves and a shelf full of hats in fancy hatboxes.

And she loved books. Her dining room was dark, its one window out to a house in Charleston, across the States in boxes and U-Haul vans, and now to Comfort, Texas. When I open Dame’s books I can smell her. When I turn the onionskin pages I can feel her wrinkled hands. I am, for an hour or two, back in Charlotte, North Carolina with cold cream on my face and the taste of café au lait on my tongue.

I believe in the power of stories to change lives. The writer, if she is good, transforms her reader. Even if she is not so good, she transforms herself. Our stories tell us who we are and who we want to be. Books mark us. So I am willing to go to considerable trouble to find the right words, to hear a well-told story, to hold a long-sought book in my hands.

So let me tell you a story about a story that became the first chapter of a new life. In 1994 I began writing about a teenager caught in the middle of her parents’ divorce. Though I didn’t call myself “a writer,” I’d been writing since high school—poems, stories, more poems. I’d published some in magazines and newspapers, but my frenzied life as a lawyer, mother, wife, community and church volunteer left little time for concentrated literary effort. This story, though, the teenager’s story, wouldn’t go away. She was persistent. I could hear her voice in my head. For six months I stole an hour each morning—before breakfast and carpools—to write. When I’d finished I wasn’t sure what it was: a long short story? A novella? I sent it to an agent. Over the next six months I forgot about it as I litigated several complicated divorce cases and dealt with the demands of my own family. One day the agent called. “I found your manuscript under the radiator in my office … I love it!” she said. And not long after that she sold the story to a publisher.

The setting for Gateway was a house very like my own in a neighbor-hood like mine in Charleston, South Carolina, where I’d lived for twenty years. The “first-person” narrator was a girl very much like my own daughter. This main character’s father was a slightly befuddled but well-intentioned lawyer who bore striking similarities to my husband. The mother—well, she wasn’t exactly me, but she was a tough career woman with a mind of her own.

How, then, could I have failed to see that their story—the divorce, the sale of their house, the child’s despair—was my story? It hadn’t happened yet, but it would. The characters were all there. The plot had already been outlined. But even as I signed copies of the book and read aloud from its pages I insisted that the story was all fiction. And I believed it.

Although Gateway was favorably reviewed and came out in a second, paperback, edition, it was far from being a best seller, and after its publication I continued to rest securely in my literary obscurity. But the book changed my life. The summer after its publication I treated myself to ten days in Vermont at the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference. In the mornings I studied poetry in a workshop led by Mark Doty. In the afternoons I sat outside in the shade of the mountains and wrote.

In the evenings there were readings by Bread Loaf faculty and visiting authors. I sat near the front where I could hear and see better. Often I sat next to a gray-haired doctor from San Antonio who was studying with poet Alan Shapiro. Both in our late forties, this doctor and I were among the oldest students at the conference; both married, with children, with professions waiting for us when we got back home.

He was quiet. He carried himself as if he had grown accustomed to his troubles. I didn’t ask about them, and he didn’t volunteer much information. I didn’t tell him that just before I’d left home to come to the
conference, my husband of 27 years had confessed his obsession with another woman. With the exception of dinners shared with other conference participants, the doctor and I didn’t socialize.

Several weeks after I’d returned to Charleston I read an article in the New York Times Magazine about a doctor-poet, Raphael Campo. I’d never heard of Campo, but thought my doctor friend from Bread Loaf might be interested. So I cut out the article and put it in an envelope along with a breezy note about my literary life: my publisher was sending me to some book fairs, including one in Nashville.

The doctor wrote back. His practice was busy, but he was taking a few days off to attend a medical conference in Nashville in mid-October. Was the book fair by any chance the same weekend? And of course, because this is a good story, his conference and my book fair were the same weekend. His seminar concluded on Saturday at noon, and so he was able to come to the book fair. He was in the audience when I read from Gateway. Later, over dinner, he talked enthusiastically about the writer he’d heard just before me, Robert Olen Butler, and Butler’s new book, Tabloid Dreams.

After dinner we found a quiet place and he showed me the book. “Let me read you the story I heard this afternoon,” he said. And he did. It was a story about a lonely woman who falls in love with a Martian. A preposterous plot. Somehow, though, Robert Olen Butler made it seem as natural as going to the grocery store.

I loved the doctor’s voice. I loved his excitement over the book, the way he handled it almost reverently. I loved the story. I loved that he wanted to read it aloud for me.

I keep Tabloid Dreams on the bookshelf beside my bed. A lovely silver bookmark—a gift from Jerry—marks the beginning of the story.

Voices de la Luna, 15 April 2013          33

We live now on a ranch just outside Comfort, Texas. Everywhere we look there are projects to be done: fences to be mended, barns to be painted, vegetable gardens to be planted and watered and weeded, wood to be cut and hauled and stacked, animals to be fed.

Have we started this country life too late? Are we crazy to think we can really live out here, two city-bred professionals in their early sixties without any farming or ranching skills? A Jew and a Unitarian in the Hill Country of Texas?

We are consoled by the knowledge that we are not the first settlers to survive our own idealism. The Germans who came to Comfort in the mid-1800s brought books and musical instruments but little experience in living off the land. They were intellectuals, not farmers. Their libraries included books by Goethe, Heine, Lessing, and Schiller. One immigrant, it is said, “... never learned to work, ... could neither fence a field nor tend cattle; he could only hire help. Instead of adjusting to pioneer life, he retreated into a world of books.” Another recalled that as a boy he took books into the field: “Meanwhile, as I was thus absorbed in reading, the sheep would drift apart in all directions, and I had to spend hours trying to get them together again...” In Sisterdale, just down the road from our ranch, almost every house boasted a library of ancient and modern classics. At weekly meetings the settlers discussed their latest readings while Comanches listened at the open door.

Some of the settlers returned to Germany, but most remained. They survived, somehow, their love affair with books. Their descendants—the Wiedenfelds, the Seidenstickers, the Marquarts—are our neighbors.

From our ranch it’s a full day’s drive to Archer City. The map of Texas seems to expand as our route becomes reality. Archer City is 20 miles south of Wichita Falls, not too far from the Oklahoma border. That’s where you find it on the map, but the map doesn’t show how far away it is. I’m not talking about physical distance. There’s plenty of that, of course. I’m talking about traveling to another dimension, where you can almost hear time winding down, where you feel, despite all the hospitality, as strange as a man on the moon. Cowboys come to town in chaps and spurs, still dusty from their morning’s work. In the Dairy Queen parking lot there are five battered pick-ups, two Jaguars, a Lexus, and a BMW. In Archer City, it seems, you are either oil rich or dirt poor, but nothing in between.

In 1970, when director Peter Bogdanovich was looking for a place to film The Last Picture Show, Larry McMurtry, who’d written the book by the same title, picked him up at the Dallas airport and drove him all over Texas. None of the locations seemed right to Bogdanovich. Just before returning to Dallas they stopped in Archer City. Tufts of tumbleweed blew down the street. Bogdanovich recalls: “… the minute we drove into town, the minute I could see that stoplight blinking at me, I said, ‘This is it.’ And Larry of course said, ‘Well, it oughta be. It’s the town I wrote about.’”

The Last Picture Show didn’t change the face of Archer City. Cloris Leachman, one of the stars, described the town as having an aura of “quiet desperation,” and it still does. But Larry McMurtry kept writing novels: Terms of Endearment, Lonesome Dove, Texasville. He made a bundle of money. And almost singlehandedly he turned his hometown into a haven for book lovers.

There are now four bookstores in little Archer City, each one named Booked Up, all owned by McMurtry. In them you’ll find African studies, history, mystery, literary criticism, biography, philosophy, art, fiction, poetry, science fiction, children’s books, foreign books and translations, anthropology, science, and travel.

The books are arranged, says the information sheet prepared by McMurtry, “erratically, impressionistically, whimsically.” There is no inventory list.

Jerry and I spent a morning in the poetry section of All Booked Up No. 2. There we found a signed copy of Stanley Kunitz’s Next to Last Things, a signed, limited edition of a children’s book by Denise Lever- tov, and a thin volume by a little-known poet, Fania Kruger. We might have passed this last one had we not recognized the author’s name. Fania Kruger was the grandmother of Jerry’s best friend.

She was born in 1893, in the Crimea. While still in high school, she joined a revolutionary movement protesting Russia’s horrendous treatment of the Jews. Her family feared for her safety, and in 1908 they left for Fort Worth, Texas. There she married Sam Kruger, who later founded a jewelry chain for Fort Worth, Texas. There she married Sam Kruger, who later founded what eventually became the Zale jewelry chain. Not until she had children did she begin writing poetry. Fania Kruger died in Austin in 1977.

Jerry drives home from Archer City. I read aloud from Kruger’s book, Cossack Laughter, published in 1937. At the back of the book is a yellowed piece of newspaper marking this poem:

If each of us be but a blade of grass, And touching one another, O comrade cherish Each neighboring blade, and let not hate enflame Life’s field, or blade by blade, we perish.

Jerry watches the road. I watch his face. We laugh about the four grocery bags of books that fill the back seat. Are we crazy? Do we really need more books? What are we going to do with them? We’re running out of bookshelves. But we both know that if we ever stop being obsessed by books, stop wanting to read and hear stories, if that day ever comes, our own story will be nearly over.

Lee Robinson has published two volumes of poetry, Hearsay and Creed, and a young adult novel, Gateway. She lives in Comfort, Texas.
**Amaya**  
*Richard Luftig*

With one hand Amaya massaged her protruding belly and with the other raised the cup of green tea to her lips. Only two more months and the baby would thankfully arrive.

It wasn’t that she minded being pregnant with her and Kevin’s first child. She liked the experience despite the way it made her look when she gazed in the mirror in their small apartment at the University of Illinois. What looked back was a slight, twenty-two year old woman, just over five feet tall, with a stomach that she thought made her look like a beached seal.

Kevin was always so kind whenever he saw her looking at herself. He would come up from behind and circle her waist. “It’s not good to be married to a basketball.”

He pushed away her long, black hair and kissed her neck. “Don’t worry about that,” he said. “Long arms run in my family.” Then they would giggle, fall on the double bed that was becoming too small, and make whatever love they could without actually having sex.

No, Amaya looked forward to the baby despite the fact that the girl—she and Kevin had asked the doctor to tell them the gender—would make the small apartment even more crowded. Rather, it was the problems to come afterward: what they would do with the baby, and how they would travel back to her parent’s family, it is customary to name the first child after the geographical place where the baby was born. Marlene stopped chewing. “Don’t tell me you and Kevin are naming your girl Champaign-Urbana!”

Amaya lied. “Since I became pregnant I hardly eat.”

“Guess you’ll be ecstatic when the baby finally comes.”

Amaya smiled. “Yes, it will be nice to feel normal again.”

Marlene smeared another slab of cream cheese on her bagel. “So, have you and Kevin decided on a name?”

Amaya looked down. “No, the naming continues to be a difficulty.”

“How do you mean?”

Amaya struggled to find the right words in English. “In our family, it is customary to name the first child after the geographical place where the baby was born.”

Marlene looked up from her bagel. “What state are we in?” she asked.

“Illinois,” Marlene said. “Hey I get it; you’ll name the child after the last syllable in the state’s name. I have to admit it does sound Japanese.”

Amaya smiled. “I’m glad you agree.”

“Yeah,” Marlene said. “I’m just glad that Kevin isn’t attending college in Kansas.”

Amaya struggled to understand but came up blank. “What do you mean?”

“Forget it. What does Kevin think of the idea?”

“He doesn’t hate the idea, but he’s afraid that his mother will.”

“I take it his mother isn’t too crazy about having a Japanese daughter-in-law.”

Amaya lowered her eyes. “It’s difficult to tell. She hardly ever speaks to me. Mostly she acts like I’m not there.”

Marlene pushed her half-eaten bagel away. “That’s it; I have to stop or I’m going to end up looking like the Goodyear Blimp.”

She wiped the edges of her mouth with a napkin. “How did you and Kevin meet, anyway?”

“We met in Japan. Kevin was on a grant doing research at the University in Shimane. I was an undergraduate majoring in literature. It was hitome bore—what you Americans call love at first sight.”

“And you two got married right away?”

Amaya sighed. “Yes and no.”

“Yes and no?” Marlene said. “Honey, marriage is like pregnancy either you are or you ain’t.”

“You must understand,” Amaya said. “My parents are from a rural village. They believe in kodon, tradition. In their eyes, Kevin and I are not really married until we have the shinzen shiki, the traditional Japanese wedding ceremony at the Shinto Shrine. And with Kevin’s dissertation and job searches, I don’t know when, if ever, we will make it back for that.”

The key turned in the door and Kevin entered. At six-foot three, he leaped rather than walked to the table where the women sat, folded himself in half, and gave his wife a full kiss. Amaya involuntarily stiffened and her cheeks reddened. She never could get used to the way Americans engaged in public acts of affection: necking ardently on park benches, groping each other on the dance floor, running their hands over their partner’s bodies while waiting for a bus. In rural Japan, couples refrained from even holding hands.

“How’s my favorite girl? I missed you.”

“Fine. I missed you, too,” Amaya paused. “We have company.” Kevin didn’t seem to get the hint and kissed her again. “Yeah, I noticed. How’s it going, Marlene?”

Marlene put down her napkin and got up. “Just great. But I think I better leave you two lovebirds alone.”

She hugged Amaya. “Don’t worry so much. Things have a way of working out.” She pointed to the bag. “You two keep the bagels in case you need a late night snack.”

After she left, Kevin poured himself a Coke and sat down across from his wife. He was more angular than thin, with reddish-brown, unruly hair that defied the decrees of a comb, and freckled arms from years growing up on an Indiana farm. The only thing that hinted at his academic nature was the wire-rimmed oval glasses. His eyes were the first thing that Amaya had noticed about him, the feature that had caused her instantly to fall in love with him.

“What was all that about? Sounds like you and Marlene were having a pretty intense conversation. Any problems?”

Amaya wondered what she should say. She didn’t want to put any more pressure on him. “No, just the usual,” she said. “Expectant mother stuff. Everything’s fine.”

Kevin put down his glass and studied his hands. Amaya knew it was what he did when he was worried. “What is wrong?” she asked.

“I don’t want to worry you.”

“It’s okay. Just tell me. Maybe I can help.”

“I spoke to my parents today,” he said. “Oh? How are they?”

“So, so.” He paused. “Actually, not so good. Dad’s getting pretty depressed. The weather stinks—this drought is killing him. He’s been delaying putting in the corn, waiting for the rain, but he can’t wait anymore. It’s the worst drought he’s seen in all the years he’s been farming.”

“I’m sorry,” Amaya said. “I wish there was something we could do.”

There was a long, awkward silence. “Actually, there is. I told them we would come this Sunday for dinner.”

Amaya took in a short, involuntary breath. “Without our discussing it first?” He reached across the table and took her hand.

“I know, Hon, and I’m sorry. It was just that my Dad sounded so defeated. I’ve never heard him like that. I just thought a visit from us would cheer him up.”

Amaya allowed him to rub the top of her hand with his thumb. “What about your mother?”

“What about her?”

“She doesn’t approve of me.”

“She wouldn’t approve of anybody I married.”

“It’s more than that. Your mother doesn’t like me.”

She could see from his face that he was trying to find the right words. “You have to try to understand Mom. She’s Indiana, home sown and grown. She’s never been farther east than Pittsburgh. Folks from Indiana get set in their ways, used to thinking in a certain manner. She just hasn’t warmed up to my marrying a girl from Japan. She will.”

“I don’t need her to love me, just accept who I am … that I am married to her son.”

Kevin remained silent.

“What happens if your parents ask me what we plan to name the baby?” Amaya asked.

“Tell them we’re still working on it.”

“I don’t like to lie,” she said.

He looked at her. “You’re not and we are. Please, Amaya, let’s make this as painless as possible. We’ll go to dinner and be out in a few hours. I just want to see my dad.”

Amaya looked down. More than anything, she did not want her husband to see her cry.

“We’ll do as you wish,” she said.

Amaya could not get used to the geography of Indiana. In Japan, if there were not mountains, there were valleys. Sooner or later one came to a bay or a sound engulfing a peninsula.

But here in the Midwest everything was flat, arrow-straight. True, there were hills that came up on you from time to time, but mostly the landscape was cultivated fields that were only occasionally broken by a small town, a farmhouse, or a church.

Three hours east from Urbana, they exited the Interstate at Terre Haute and drove on a two-lane road through Worthington. Outside of town, Kevin turned off, passed through a gate and onto a gravelled drive. On both sides were plowed, treeless fields.

“You’re father owns all of this?”

Kevin guided the car around rutts and potholes. “The bank owns it but he farms it.”

“You Americans are very wealthy,” she said.

He laughed. “We’re far from wealthy. In Indiana, farmers say they’re land rich and cash poor. A farmer not far from here once won the lottery. A reporter asked him what he was going to do with the money. He answered that he was going to farm until it was gone.”

They pulled up to a two-story brick house. Amaya still couldn’t believe the size of people’s homes. Everyone not only had their own bedroom but their own bathroom as well. In Japan, a room served many uses: bedroom, sitting room, even a place to eat meals. She wondered again why Americans were so preoccupied with having houses so big that the people who lived there needn’t interact with one another.
Kevin parked the car and opened the passenger door for his wife. For Amaya, one of the biggest inconveniences of being pregnant was exiting an automobile. She had to slide toward the door then get out sideways like an oversized duck. She swung her feet to the ground, pushed on the seat, and latched on to Kevin’s arm. With acute embarrassment, she saw that her in-laws were standing at their front door watching.

Even though they were out in public, Amaya was grateful that Kevin put his arm around her. As she approached her in-laws, she didn’t know what to do, shake hands or hug them. And what should her facial expression? Should it be serious? If she smiled too widely, would it be seen as a sign of disrespect?

Kevin’s father was smiling. “Amaya, how nice to see you!” He extended his arms. Perhaps, Amaya thought, he wanted to give her a two-handed shake.

Amaya stopped directly in front of him and bowed. “Mr. Little- ton, thank you for having us. I hope you are well.”

From his laughter, she realized that she had made a mistake. He encircled his arms around her. “Here in the Midwest, we give hugs. And please call me Steve. Or better yet, Dad.”

Amaya opened up her mouth to speak but nothing came out. It took all of her concentration to realize that Kevin was talking.

“Thanks, Dad, but in Japan it would be unthinkable for a younger person to call an elder by their first name. They might refer to him as shuito or genkun, which means honored father, but that would be about it.”

Kevin’s father looked at his daughter-in-law. “Well, most hon- ored seems a little over the top, so I guess genkun will have to do.”

Amaya turned to Kevin’s mother and bowed. The woman bowed slightly in return but Amaya did not discern friendliness in her face. “Hello, Amaya. Welcome.”

Most of the small talk and dinner was a blur; questions about the baby, some polite inquiries about Japan. Amaya drank water, the others wine. Kevin and his mother kept up a nonstop conver- sation. Amaya noticed that Kevin’s father was mostly silent. She was thankful that her in-laws didn’t ask about the baby’s name. She wondered if Kevin had warned his parents in advance.

Amaya searched for a topic that might bring her father-in-law into the conversation. “What is it like to run a farm as big as this one?” she said.

From the darkness that came across his face, she knew imme- diately that she had made a mistake.

Kevin’s father lightly fingered the spoon lying on his napkin. “I’m not going to lie to you,” he said. “It’s been tough.”

“How bad, Dad?” Kevin asked. “Might as well tell me the truth.”

“Bad enough that if it doesn’t rain soon we might not get in the crop. It’s been dry every spring when we expect rain. What’s going to happen during the summer when it’s supposed to be dry?”

Amaya couldn’t believe that she had brought up the painful topic and had inadvertently caused this man, whom she hardly knew, discomfort. She searched for a way to resolve the situation. “Perhaps you need to try Hana Taue,” she said quietly.

Kevin’s father looked up. “Hana what? The only Hana I know is Hanna Montana from the television show.”

Amaya smiled even though she didn’t understand the joke.

“Hana Taue,” she repeated. “In Japan it is a ceremony we con- duct every June for a good crop.”

Her father-in-law seemed interested. “How does it work?

Amaya tried to recall the ceremony. “In the Hana Taue, the entire village travels to the Shinto temple and asks the priest to intercede to the ancestor gods for a good rice planting and a suc- cessful growing season.”

“Gods?” Kevin’s mother said. “You people pray to more than one God? Are idols involved too?”

“Hush,” his father said. “I want to hear this.” He turned back to Amaya. “Please, go on.”

“After the prayers are said, the priest blesses the seeds. Then two girls who have been selected and who are wearing special costumes are given the raisu za-men, the rice seedlings to carry. Everyone walks to a field, where the girls give the seeds to two farmers chosen for a sacred planting.”

“Then what happens?” Kevin’s father asked.

“Then we all go home and drink sake.”

Everyone laughed. Kevin squeezed Amaya’s hand under the table.

“I love it,” his father said. “Especially the sake part. Do you think we could do a Hana Taue now?”

Kevin’s mother spoke up. “Here? In Indiana? Stephen, have you lost your mind?”

His features hardened. “The only thing I’m losing is my farm. Hell, I’m willing to try anything if it will bring rain.”

He turned to Amaya. “Could you do the ceremony for us to- day?”

Amaya thought she had missed another joke. Perhaps they were having fun at her expense.

“It would be impossible,” Amaya said. “First the ceremony is for rice. You don’t grow rice here. Next, there is no Shinto tem- ple, no priest. And there are no girls to don the special costumes and carry the seeds to the fields.”

“We have corn seeds,” Kevin’s father said. “In Indiana, seeds are seeds. If the gods aren’t choosy, I’m not. We got fields just a quarter mile down the road.” He smiled at his daughter-in-law.

“And we have a bona-fide Japanese maiden who is perfect for pulling the whole thing off.”

He took her hand in his. “Will you do a Hana Taue for us?”

Amaya looked at Kevin and saw him mouth the word “please.”

For Amaya, what followed was surreal: a drive to the fields, her father-in-law giving her some corn seeds, and her offering them to the ancestor gods.

Not remembering the proper prayers that she had learned in childhood for the Hana Taue, Amaya instead intoned “kyunenju taihen osewa ni narimashita,” which was the Japanese New Year’s blessing, and planted the seeds.

If Kevin realized what she was really saying he didn’t let on.

When they said their goodbyes at the door, Amaya bowed to her mother-in-law and then to Kevin’s father. He stopped her in mid-bow and hugged her closely. “I apologize if I am making a cultural mistake,” he said, “but here in America a daughter does not bow to her father.” He paused. “And you, my dear, are my daughter in every sense of the word.”

He let her go and looked into her eyes. “Please forgive me if I am being rude, but I have to ask. I’ve never heard of the name

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Amaya. Does it mean anything in Japanese?”
Amaya shyly looked down. “It means night rain.”

Back home, Amaya and Kevin lay in bed. The air conditioner was clearly overmatched and the window was cracked open to at least circulate a breeze. Kevin mercifully rubbed Amaya’s back, which was sore from the car ride. With his other hand, he stroked her hair.

“You know, my father is your biggest admirer,” he said. “You could ask him for the moon and stars and he would try to give them to you.”

Amaya loved the softness of his breath against her neck. “I love them,” she said.

“Even my mother?”

She giggled. “Well, I’m trying to understand her. I would like to think we respect each other.”

“I know how much you miss your parents,” he whispered.

“Yes, I miss them very much.”

“We’ll get back to see them, I promise.”

Amaya began to cry. “When? It will certainly be a very long time. Long after the correct time for the naming festival.”

“Do you think they will be pleased when we name the baby Nois?” he asked.

She turned around to face him. “Really? You would agree to name her that?”

He kissed her nose. “Sure, why not. It’s a wonderful name with a nice Japanese sound to it.”

“But what about your mother? Won’t she object?”

“She’ll get used to it, especially when we christen the baby’s middle name after her.”

“Your mother’s name is Mildred. We’re going to name the baby Nois? Mildred Littleton? How will our daughter contend with that?”

Kevin laughed. “No one said life was easy.”

They fell asleep in each other’s arms. Shortly after midnight, Amaya jolted awake. She thought she had heard a noise, but everything was quiet.

Perhaps the baby was kicking. It wouldn’t be the first time Amaya had been awakened by her daughter’s sudden movements. She rubbed her stomach. No, the baby was quiet.

She heard the sound again. It was thunder. Not loud, but the low humming sound that it makes when it is far off, getting set to approach.

Then a new sound, easily recognizable: fat, plopping raindrops against the window.

She heard each drop. Perhaps somewhere they would turn into a steady, nourishing rain. Perhaps the welcome water would head east, out from Urbana towards Indiana. Perhaps the ancestor gods really did not care about the difference between Hana Taue and the Blessings for the New Year.

Richard Luftig is a professor of Educational Psychology and Special Education at Miami University in Ohio. A recipient of the Cincinnati Post-Corbett Foundation Award for Literature and a semi-finalist for the Emily Dickinson Society Award, his poems have appeared in numerous journals in the United States and internationally in Japan, Canada, Australia, Europe, Thailand, Hong Kong, and India. One of his published poems was nominated for the 2012 Pushcart Poetry Prize.
On the week that 25,000 people stood in line at the Alamo to see the “Victory or Death” letter written on March 3, 1836, by the brash, besieged Lieutenant Colonel William B. Travis, I took long walks along the southern reach of the San Antonio River between Mission Concepción and Mission San José thinking about the difference between myths and parables.

A myth is a series of symbols out of which people and cities operate. Myths are largely unconscious, not rational. We all need our myths—even people who fear them—because they provide a frame that makes the world livable.

Travis was only 26 years old, a lawyer from Alabama, when he assumed control of the Alamo by the force of his sheer will and no small amount of hubris. The words he wrote in his letter presented his own personal myth to the world—a myth of defiance in the face of death.

“To the People of Texas & all Americans in the world,” wrote Travis. “The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot & our flag still waves proudly from our walls—I shall never surrender or retreat.” Under his signature, Travis wrote VICTORY OR DEATH and underlined the phrase three times.

In that moment, Travis’s personal myth became San Antonio’s primary myth and by extension that of all Texas. Myths have many sides. While independence and fealty to causes are worthy virtues, the dark side of the Alamo myth is a fatal obsession with lost battles and a martyr’s fear of persecution from outsiders.

We see the Alamo myth at work every time the national economy drops and calls rise for Texas to secede from the Union. At a Tea Party rally in Austin in the spring of 2009, Governor Rick Perry, in a rage over President Obama’s stimulus proposal, suggested that Texas might secede again. Quoting Sam Houston, Perry said, “Texas has yet to learn submission to any oppression, come from what source it may.” The crowd roared and waved “Secede!” signs. The issue was small but the stakes became mythic: Victory or Death, over the stimulus package.

Most presidents in modern history have evoked the Alamo myth. LBJ did it during Vietnam. Shortly after he was elected, he told the National Security Council, “Hell Vietnam is just like the Alamo. It’s just like if you were down at that gate and you were surrounded and you damn well needed somebody. Well, by God I’m going to go.” In this case, Johnson was drawing on another aspect of the Alamo myth: the collective guilt for not coming to the rescue of those under siege.

In 1999 when then Texas Governor George W. Bush was running for president, Bush went to the biannual golf tournament between the Americans and the Europeans. When he arrived, the Europeans held what seemed like an insurmountable lead over the Americans. Bush went to the American team’s locker room and read Travis’s letter to the besieged golfers. The next day Justin Leonard, a Texan on the team, sank a 45-foot putt that saved the team.

Myths are emotionally charged, which makes for spectaculars and contradictions. Throngs of people waited for as long as five hours this spring to see Travis’s letter. Most were oblivious to the fact that the small room in which Travis actually penned the letter 177 years ago was located on the northern corner of the Alamo compound. Today that block is arguably the cheesiest block in San Antonio. On it stands Ripley’s Believe It Or Not and Tomb Raider, 3-D, tawdry amusement offerings for the tourists.

As the San Antonio Express-News reported, the Alamo gift shop raked in $300,000 during the thirteen days that the Travis letter was on view. Much of the booty was from sales of two-pound chocolate bars shaped with words from the text of the letter. If a function of myth is to provide a meaningful frame, then those chocolate bars may be proof of just how little a visit to the Alamo reveals about what actually happened there, not only in the battle but also in the larger context of the Alamo’s history.

In contrast to myths, parables don’t lead to certainties or the strange Disneyfication of reality. Instead, parables confront myths and challenge them. Parables offer insight and perspective, not ultimatums. The insights happen in a flash, in a moment, in the now that is eternal.

From the parking lot on Lone Star Boulevard, the Alamo seemed a long way off, even though it was a distance of slightly more two miles. The sun was behind the clouds as my husband parked the car and we set out for our walk, headed toward Mission Conception. There was a feeling of discovery in the air.

As we walked along the path, the only sounds were moving water and the lovely mid afternoon call of a gray and salmon-pink flycatcher with an absurdly long tail. The river widened and shadows passed over rocks, some small and others the size of small rooms. The air stirred redbud trees and small patches of budding bluebonnets.

The recent improvements along the San Antonio River, from the Pearl Brewery Complex on the north to Mission Espada on the south, are the finest public works project in our city’s modern history. Now San Antonio has the best fifteen-mile linear park in the nation. When all the work is completed, more than 2020 acres of public land will be linked with the river running through it, an area much larger than New York’s Central Park, which has 843 acres, or Chicago’s lakeside parks, which have 1440.

On this day, the river worked its magic. Couples kissed on artful pedestrian bridges. Teenagers skipped rocks over the water. Runners swooshed by. People passed on bicycles. I loved the feeling of sanctuary, the easy coming and going of people, afforded by the river.

We came upon a small bend in the river. On three rocks sat three different birds: a great blue heron, a snowy egret, and a small blue heron. All three birds had their necks turned towards the river. Runners swooshed by. Their body language was striking. Both the snowy egret and the little blue heron stood on one leg with the other leg tucked up against their bodies. Their stance was so beautiful, fully inhabiting their lives. Their agenda was life. There they stood in the middle of their world, too close to the river.

Why, I wondered, had the three birds gathered, as if for a meeting. What might they be negotiating? Not victory or death; surely their agenda was life. There they stood in the middle of their world, fully inhabiting their lives. Their stance was so intentional, almost as if they understood the mysterious laws of impermanence, the fact so hard to accept, that everything changes and history is fleeting. Only the moment lasts.

Jan Jarboe Russell is a writer who lives in San Antonio.

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Chapter Fourteen

The Parking Lots at Tehran Airport Were Packed

The parking lots at Tehran airport were packed. Cars were parked in every direction and in every odd niche. Jamshid handed the car keys to one of the attendants and gave him a large tip to find a parking spot as soon as one became available. Bahram and Tooraj helped pull Cyrus’s luggage into the main airport building that teemed with friends and relatives of departing passengers. Shoving and pushing his way through the central hall, Jamshid guided Cyrus to the airport police station to pick up Cyrus’s passport, with Bahram and Tooraj valiantly catching up with their load.

A policeman asked for Cyrus’s last name and flipped through a stack of documents in a drawer, but the passport was not there. Cyrus immediately became apprehensive and hoped his departure would not be delayed. The police officer searched through the drawer once more, in vain, and looked up at Cyrus with a suspicious frown.

“Have you ever had any problem with your passport?”

Cyrus promptly replied, “Yes, yes! But that issue was completely resolved years ago. Do you want to hear the whole story?”

The policeman shook his head. “No, that’s all I needed to know.” He pulled out another drawer, rifled through the stack of passports, and quickly located Cyrus’s passport. “Apparently you are cleared to leave our country.”

Jamshid heaved a big sigh of relief. “He has been cleared three times before. When are you going to scratch his name from your list?”

The officer ignored Jamshid’s complaint, handed the passport to Cyrus, and told him, “I am glad you’re leaving this mess, don’t bother to return again.”

“What’s next?” Cyrus asked Jamshid.

“Now we go to the customs office to declare your gifts and process your luggage and pay the exit fees.”

They pulled the suitcases towards the long queues of passengers waiting for customs agents. Jamshid suggested he get rid of his Persian change, for what good would it do in America? Cyrus emptied his wallet and searched his pockets. Jamshid be

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After Cyrus had settled in his seat and fastened his seatbelt, a stewardess came to him and asked for his identification. He was puzzled and didn’t know how to respond.

“Your airline ticket is sufficient,” she said, recognizing his apprehension and assuring him. “It’s just a routine procedure.”

After she had inspected his ticket, she explained, “We have a package for you from one of your relatives,” and handed him a small plastic bag with three cans of Persian caviar surrounded by ice cubes. “This should be kept cool. Would you like me to keep them in our refrigerator during the flight?”

He returned the package to her with a grateful smile. Finally he could relax. He settled back to read his magazine. Shortly thereafter the plane was aloft, flying toward Turkey.

It was a timely departure from Iran. Cyrus was sure this particular cycle of violence in Iran would eventually wind down and the country would enter another long period of hibernation. But what ensued in the coming months and made headlines worldwide turned out to be completely different. Frequent nightly violence grew into daily clashes, until the turmoil became a big storm, and finally a huge convulsion that profoundly changed the life of everybody in his native country.

Cyrus touched his jacket and felt the tape of Ayatollah Khomeini’s sermons pressing on his chest. He smiled. He should really listen to the tape and see what this Ayatollah said that could touch people’s hearts, move his country’s youth, and knock on the foundations of the Shah’s government. Soon the pilot announced they were over Turkey. During the last hour of the daylight Cyrus could see the mountains of eastern Turkey, and towering above them majestic Mount Ararat with its bright ice cap. A moment later Cyrus pulled out the tape. The clear plastic case was unmarked. He took the cassette player from his briefcase and inserted the tape, attached earphones, and began rolling the tape.

Over a background of scratchy static came the announcement that the upcoming sermon had been delivered in the courtyard of the mausoleum of Imam Ali in Najaf, Iraq. The announcer stated the oration was dedicated to the victims of the anti-Shah demonstration in Tabriz on the bloody and infamous day of 19 February 1978. Ayatollah Khomeini began by reciting the first two verses of the Koran. Then he called on all Moslem brothers and sisters to adhere to the teachings of Islam and to resist all pressure to abandon their religious values. Soon his sermon moved into specifics: “Greetings to the courageous and God-fearing people

“Are you a physician?”

“Yes.”

The official immediately stopped the search and told him there was no need to open his suitcases. Cyrus closed the briefcase, and the group proceeded to the ticket office. Now the Ayatollah Khomeini tape in his pocket felt much lighter, and he was glad he had taken the risk of bringing it along.

A high glass wall separated the departure area from the rest of the airport. He hugged Jamshid, Bahram, and Tooraj one last time and said his heartfelt farewell: “Khoda Hafez!”

He joined the waiting line for check-in and seat assignments, which was located behind the customs inspection area. Finally it was his turn, and he handed over his suitcases to the airline employee, received his boarding pass, and proceeded toward the gate.

After Cyrus had settled in his seat and fastened his seatbelt, a stewardess came to him and asked for his identification. He was puzzled and didn’t know how to respond.

“Your airline ticket is sufficient,” she said, recognizing his apprehension and assuring him. “It’s just a routine procedure.”

After she had inspected his ticket, she explained, “We have a package for you from one of your relatives,” and handed him a small plastic bag with three cans of Persian caviar surrounded by ice cubes. “This should be kept cool. Would you like me to keep them in our refrigerator during the flight?”

He returned the package to her with a grateful smile. Finally he could relax. He settled back to read his magazine. Shortly thereafter the plane was aloft, flying toward Turkey.

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Persian Marchers: A Novel
Mo H Saidi

Chapter Fourteen
The Parking Lots at Tehran Airport Were Packed

The parking lots at Tehran airport were packed. Cars were parked in every direction and in every odd niche. Jamshid handed the car keys to one of the attendants and gave him a large tip to find a parking spot as soon as one became available. Bahram and Tooraj helped pull Cyrus’s luggage into the main airport building that teemed with friends and relatives of departing passengers. Shoving and pushing his way through the central hall, Jamshid guided Cyrus to the airport police station to pick up Cyrus’s passport, with Bahram and Tooraj valiantly catching up with their load.

A policeman asked for Cyrus’s last name and flipped through a stack of documents in a drawer, but the passport was not there. Cyrus immediately became apprehensive and hoped his departure would not be delayed. The police officer searched through the drawer once more, in vain, and looked up at Cyrus with a suspicious frown.

“Have you ever had any problem with your passport?”

Cyrus promptly replied, “Yes, yes! But that issue was completely resolved years ago. Do you want to hear the whole story?”

The policeman shook his head. “No, that’s all I needed to know.” He pulled out another drawer, rifled through the stack of passports, and quickly located Cyrus’s passport. “Apparently you are cleared to leave our country.”

Jamshid heaved a big sigh of relief. “He has been cleared three times before. When are you going to scratch his name from your list?”

The officer ignored Jamshid’s complaint, handed the passport to Cyrus, and told him, “I am glad you’re leaving this mess, don’t bother to return again.”

“What’s next?” Cyrus asked Jamshid.

“Now we go to the customs office to declare your gifts and process your luggage and pay the exit fees.”

They pulled the suitcases towards the long queues of passengers waiting for customs agents. Jamshid suggested he get rid of his Persian change, for what good would it do in America? Cyrus emptied his wallet and searched his pockets. Jamshid begged the officer to return the package to her with a grateful smile. Finally he took the cassette player from his briefcase and announced they were over Turkey. During the last hour of the daylight Cyrus could see the mountains of eastern Turkey, and towering above them majestic Mount Ararat with its bright ice cap. A moment later Cyrus pulled out the tape. The clear plastic case was unmarked. He took the cassette player from his briefcase and inserted the tape, attached earphones, and began rolling the tape.

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of beloved Azerbaijan! Salutations to the upright men and honorable youth of Tabriz, and to all those who are rising up against the monstrous Pahlavi family! Death to the Shah! Long life to the beloved people of Tabriz, who delivered a painful punch to the atrocious babblers in their mendacious government!”

The service cart with an array of beverages stopped at his row. He asked for a can of Pepsi and returned to the tape: “A wretch has surrendered the great wealth of our oppressed nation to foreigners and has the gall to demand we call him ‘savior of the country.’ He pretends to be a guardian of freedom but does not allow any criticism or dialogue. The righteous Iranian people are resisting the government’s pressure to destroy Islam. They have been tortured and are dying in dungeons. The armed forces are shooting at innocent people with machine-guns….” His voice was monotonous, his style plain, and the narrative unadorned, as though he were reading his script without affection or feeling. Yet his words carried heavy weight. Even though Cyrus was no longer a religious person, he had experienced and observed the Shah’s political oppression, and Khomeini’s words resonated in his heart.

“We must salute the Iranian people—they are determined, they are resisting injustice. Although they are incurring many casualties, sacrificing their sons and daughters for freedom, they will succeed. When the whole nation awakens, even women will rise against the tyrant. Our nation will be victorious. The streets and alleys of every city and village resound with cries of “Death to the Shah!” I ask God Almighty to champion the just cause of faithful Moslems, remove their evil oppressors, and eliminate all traces of this ungodly family.” Again Ayatollah Khomeini referred to specific demonstrations in various Iranian cities. He spoke again of the casualties in Qum, Tabriz, and Tehran. He gave detailed numbers of the dead and wounded in every city and cautioned his listeners not to believe the Shah’s lies. “The oppressor himself orders all these atrocities. He uses guns against our innocent people. The killings are the result of his explicit mandate. He receives daily reports, as do I, about the cry of the people and their basic and just demands, but while my heart cries for you, this despot issues more commands to shoot the innocent.”

In the next segment he addressed policemen and soldiers directly: “This miserable person—the Shah—must be eliminated. Why is the military asleep and letting our nation suffer? You Iranian soldiers and police, wake up and join your brothers and sisters.” At the end of the sermon, Ayatollah Khomeini invited all parts of Iranian society to fight against the Shah’s regime until victory: “You, the great Iranian nation, do not fear and do not slacken in your battle against injustice. You patriotic soldiers, giving your blood for the country, wake up and protect Iranian Islam.”

To his utter astonishment, Cyrus found Ayatollah Khomeini’s plain language clever, sharp, and moving. Now he understood why these tapes had become a powerful tool in the struggle to oust the Shah. Reza had commented with admiration that Ayatollah Khomeini’s words had the power to ignite the soul of the Iranian masses. Indeed, they might provoke devoted Iranian Moslems into explosive action. He realized the Shah faced a serious challenge this time, more grave than ever before. And Khomeini was building the case for an “Iranian Islam.”

Cyrus packed the tape and the photo of Ayatollah Khomeini into his briefcase and began to listen to one of the airline’s music channels. When the beverage cart came again, he chose a glass of red wine, and soon thereafter he fell asleep.

It was early morning when the pilot’s loud announcement woke him up. They were approaching Frankfurt Airport. To help pass the five-hour wait for his connecting flight, Cyrus bought a few bottles of wine in the duty-free shop and the day’s International Herald Tribune and settled in one of the cafés with a fresh croissant and a cup of café latte.

In the air on his way to Texas he continued mulling over his conversations with Bahram, Shirin, and Reza. They were fearless young idealists. He worried about Reza’s fate in Evin Prison. He wondered how the Shah would manage the explosive situation in Iran. That ruler had been able to hang onto his throne despite many uprisings. He had overcome attempts by the popular prime minister, Dr. Mossadeq, who had almost succeeded in removing him in the 1950s, and thereafter the Shah had ruled Iran with an iron fist. It had become a time of terror. Hundreds of pro-Mossadeq activists, intellectuals, and military commanders were executed by firing squad. The Shah made life miserable for intellectuals and had run many of them out of the country. Through the course of decades, the only group he had spared had been the clergy. The mosques were immune from scrutiny by the Savak, the secret service, and they enjoyed their quiet immunity. They were the only surviving opposition organization, and they had filled the political vacuum with discreet but effective resistance. The Shah believed in God, and he was a Shiite. He wasn’t going to attack the mosques, even when they harbored the nests of organized opposition, and he wasn’t going to kill a mullah. As a truly superstitious man, he was afraid to challenge or eliminate the core supporters around Ayatollah Khomeini. He feared God’s wrath. The eccentric Ayatollah knew that.

That stormy winter of social turbulence was unleashing a destructive force against the Shah’s regime. Ignoring Ayatollah Khomeini’s followers, the mullahs headquartered in the mosques—the Shah believed in the sanctity of the mosques—his security forces focused their attention against liberal, educated, and secular groups, and they persecuted intellectuals, artists, and writers, a large number of them in prison writing grim pieces:

They don’t answer your greeting, —heads are sunk in their collars. No one will raise his hand —to welcome arriving friends. Eyes downcast, able to see only their feet, —because the road is dark and slick.

Cyrus sipped some water and continued reading the poem:

They won’t reply to your greetings. The air, tight; doors, shut; heads sunk in their collars, hands hidden. Trees are the fragile skeletons, the soil, barren; the sky tight, the heavens are gloomy: It is winter!
Cyrus tried to shake off depressing thoughts about Iran. When the drink cart came by he asked for red wine. “We have an excellent Shiraz wine from Australia.”

Cyrus explained to the attendant that this grape variety originated from the Shiraz vineyards in Southern Iran. The word Shiraz led his mind back to the country again, Iran, and to Shiraz, Hafez’s birthplace, and he quoted Hafez’ quatrains:

When we are wandering in heaven
we won’t find the place more
beautiful than here on earth,
Shiraz, a stream, Roknabad.

“Yes, I have heard of the Persian poet Hafez,” the attendant said. “Well, Hafez really loved Shiraz wine,” Cyrus smiled. The flight attendant served him and moved on. The wine had a pleasant bouquet, a rich taste, and left an enjoyable after-taste in his mouth. He took another sip and soon the wine revitalized him. He felt at ease. He finished the glass and succumbed to a long nap.

In Texas, the entire family was at the airport. Emily had brought three red roses wrapped in green tissue. She was glowing with happiness, and Cyrus was glad to reunite with his family. He kissed and hugged everybody, and everybody returned his embraces warmly. The children jumped up and down, clamoring for stories about their never-seen relatives.

That first evening at home, he spent a long time telling his tales, like a frame story, first about his mother’s condition, then his brothers and their families, and then their other relatives. Emily loved her mother-in-law’s gift of a gold bracelet. His daughter looked at the book of modern Iranian poetry that Tooraj had sent. She liked the illustrations, but she could not read a single word of the poems because they were printed in Farsi.

“Don’t your friends know we cannot speak Farsi?” she wondered.

“They simply assumed you all understand and read Farsi,” Cyrus explained. “I’ll be happy to translate the poems for you, one at a time, though.”

“Yes, please, but wait till I finish my homework. I better get right to it.” She picked up her gifts and left for her room.

Emily was an avid reader and appreciated Persian poetry. She had read some Persian poems in English and a few in German translations. She only knew enough Farsi to be polite with visitors. She urged him to translate some of the poems for her, too.

After the children had gone to bed, Emily placed the Symphony Fantastique on the stereo and poured them some California wine. It was almost midnight, but the excitement of their reunion kept them awake. The combination of music and wine did its magic. They went to the master bedroom, hugged, and kissed. A bouquet of red roses rested on the table in the corner of the bedroom. Emily’s fair skin glowed through the turquoise lingerie covering her soft and warm body. Cyrus took her in his arms and pulled her into his lap.

“Darling, I have missed you very much, your natural scent, your everlasting smile, and your warm lips.”

“I missed touching you,” Emily whispered. “I am so glad you are safely home.” And she moved into his arms.

Afterward, they lay on the bed looking up at the ceiling. He became thoughtful.

“Let’s hear a poem now,” Emily suggested.

But Cyrus’s thoughts had returned to his homeland. He talked about his observations in Iran and recounted the deep unhappiness of her people. The depressing air. The dark skies. The hidden sun.

He described the violent events he saw and the precarious position of intellectual and liberal groups. He talked about Iranian youth and about Reza’s situation and about the deep political unrest. Now he became sad and gradually painted an even gloomier picture of his native country. He described the polluted winter of Tehran and the smog that loomed over the people, suffocating them. Finally he turned on the light and leafed through Ahmad Shamloo’s poems, until he found one that reflected the poet’s deep apprehensions about the social and political injustice in Iran.

“How about this one?” Cyrus said. “Anthem for the Bright Man Who Went into the Shadows.”

Emily nodded and said, “Please read it to me.”

I am bothered by a pain, which isn’t mine
I have lived in a land, which isn’t mine
I have lived with a name, which isn’t mine
I have wept with grief, which isn’t mine
I was born out of joy, which isn’t mine
I die a death, which isn’t mine.

“Oh! What a sad poem this is,” Emily exclaimed. “Isn’t there anything happy in Iran?” She added pensively, “What a gloomy mind this poet has. He does not seem to have a single drop of pride or self-confidence.”

Cyrus thought Emily had misunderstood the poem and replied, “My love! He is not depressed. He is only describing the mood of the Iranian people.”

They entered into a long conversation about Iran, its literature, its art, its many historical monuments, and they vowed to visit Iran soon with the entire family—a trip that would never occur as time and events rolled on.

Irrawaddy Literary Festival

Burma (also known as Myanmar) held its first-ever literary festival in February 2013. After the Burmese military had suppressed free expression for almost five decades, in 2011 military leaders signaled a change of direction, freeing Burma’s best-known citizen, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, and seeking improved ties with the rest of the global community. The Irrawaddy Literary Festival is one sign of improved relations, and Aung San Suu Kyi herself was listed on the festival program as its patron. She wrote:

I am delighted to lend my support and personal participation to this first Irrawaddy Literary Festival. Literature has always been a big part of my life and I hope this festival, which brings together some of the finest talent from Burma, the UK, and elsewhere, will encourage more people to explore the world of literature and further their understanding of the English language.

One can only hope that Burma has permanently relinquished its status as an international pariah and will continue to engage other nations in a variety of constructive ways. As for the literary community, by all reports the festival was a resounding success, and plans for the 2014 festival are already under way. Visit the festival’s website at http://irrawaddylitfest.com to learn more.
San Antonio Small Presses

**Pecan Grove Press**

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

Following the loss of Palmer Hall, Luis Cortez, the managing editor of Pecan Grove Press, is publishing Palmer Hall’s thirty-six elegies and five interludes written by Palmer during the several months preceding his death. The collection will be available in mid-April and may be obtained from Pecan Grove Press.

The PGP’s authors and Palmer’s friends may send their donation to support the publication of Palmer’s elegies by mailing their checks to:

**Pecan Grove Press, c/o Luis Cortez, One Camino Santa Maria, San Antonio, TX 78228.**

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**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 levels. 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.

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**Wings Press**

Wings Press, founded in 1975, strives to publish multicultural books, chapbooks, ebooks, and other literary products that enliven the human spirit and enlighten the mind. Writing is a transformational art form capable of changing the world, primarily by allowing us to glimpse something of each other’s souls. Good writing is innovative, insightful, and interesting. But most of all it is honest. This is the Wings creed.

The publisher, editor, and designer since 1995, Bryce Milligan, tries not to let commercial considerations cloud the decision to publish any particular work. What does get published is often called by Milligan “necessary work.” Since 1995, Wings Press has published over 130 books of poetry, novels, short story collections, historical and biographical works, works of literary criticism, and books for children by a wide range of authors, from unknown, first-book poets to the poet laureate of the United States (and the laureates of at least six states). Wings Press publications have been honored with the American Book Award, the International Latino Book Award, the PEN Josephine Miles Award for Literary Excellence, the Balcones Poetry Prize, the Premio Coatlicue, the IMPAC Dublin International Literary Award shortlist, Pushcart nominations, and others. Go to www.wingspress.com for more information. Wings Press books are distributed internationally by the Independent Publishers Group.

**New Releases from Wings Press**

**Again for the First Time**

by **Rosemary Catacalos**

Available 1 June 2013

*Again for the First Time* was originally published in 1984 by Tooth of Time Books in Santa Fe. Wings Press is proud to publish this 30th anniversary edition. *Again for the First Time* received the Texas Institute of Letters Poetry Prize. It was the first full-length collection of poetry by Rosemary Catacalos, who went on to become a Dobie-Paisano fellow, a Stegner fellow, a recipient of an NEA creative writing fellowship, and numerous other honors.

**As If The Empty Chair / Como si la silla vacía**

by **Margaret Randall**

Hand-sewn, Japanese stitch, 80 pages, illustrated with photographs by Margaret Randall and Annabella Bald. Facing-page Spanish translations by Leandro Katz and Diego Guerra. Limited to 400 signed and numbered copies, hand bound (Japanese stitch).
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The San Antonio Public Library Foundation
Supports the Public Library
Poetry & Arts Events in San Antonio

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


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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio

“A poem … begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. … It finds the thought and the thought finds the words.” Robert Frost (1874–1963)

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

CARVER COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTER—This venue traces its historic roots back some 85 years. It is both a gallery for contemporary art exhibits and a theater for performing artists. www.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 THEATER—Opened in 1929 and restored in 1989 as a performing arts center, the Majestic is said to be one of the finest “atmospheric” theaters ever built. www.majesticempire.com

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

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

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 visitors to, San Antonio and South Texas through the performance of live music. www.sasymp.org

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL 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.swschool.org

WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE—Extensive exhibits cover natural history and natural science of Texas. Rebuilt on grounds are four early Texas houses and a furnished log cabin.


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.