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October has long been my favorite month, and for many reasons. First, the summer roasting period is finally over. I can (and do) spend long, rapturous minutes watching the parade of leaves cascading from their mother trees or swirling down the streets. I await with glee the first cold snap blowing in under a harvest moon and delight in the prospect of catching a whiff of wood smoke from my neighbors’ fireplaces. My thoughts turn to sweaters, pumpkins, chile and hot chocolate, any of which would have been unimaginable in August. Sometimes I even check out the gridiron to see how the Cowboys are doing.

But in the midst of this jollity, something less agreeable also surfaces about this time: I begin to brood over the future of our nation’s schools. We all know the adage, “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime,” but of late these venerable words have taken on a new and ominous urgency. According to The Washington Post, American students performed decidedly mid-pack on an international test given in 2009 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, lagging well behind such nations as South Korea, Finland, Singapore, and China. Further, The Huffington Post reports that in 2012, one American student dropped out of high school every 26 seconds, thus swelling the ranks of the unskilled and potentially unemployed.

We cannot afford to outsource precious jobs because our schools fail to equip young Americans to perform them. We cannot afford a high school dropout rate of 22 percent (BoostUp.org), nor a national unemployment rate in the double digits. Those who do not finish high school represent not just a loss of talent and energy; in the end, this shortfall will be measured in taxpayer dollars.

There are many things we could do to remedy the problem. We could (and should) pay teachers more, much more, to attract and retain the best and the brightest. We could build more and better schools. We could decrease the student/teacher ratio. We could place more emphasis on academic subjects and less on sports. But none of this will happen until we unite behind the principle that all Americans deserve a solid education that will allow them to flourish in a fast-moving, high-tech world. Perhaps even more important, we need an educated electorate to navigate our cumbersome representative government, citizens who can distinguish substance from hype and vote accordingly. And the sooner we carry off this transformation, the better, because the stakes are high. Very high. What Benjamin Disraeli observed of his homeland applies as well to ours: “Upon the education of the people of this country the state of this country depends.”
Born in Louisiana in 1966, Leigh Anne Lester studied at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1993. Her work has been exhibited nationally, and she received $50,000 for the 2011 Hunting Prize Award for painting and drawing. Her most recent solo exhibitions have been at Artpace, San Antonio; International Museum of Surgical Science, Chicago; Houston Arts Alliance Gallery, Houston; Conduit Gallery, Dallas; Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio; and Southwest School of Art and Craft, San Antonio. She has also received a grant from the Artist Foundation in San Antonio and attended a residency at Ucross Foundation in Wyoming. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Texas at San Antonio. For nineteen years she has co-sponsored cactus bra SPACE, which has launched the careers of many recognized Texas artists. Leigh Anne Lester lives and works in San Antonio. For more info, please visit www.cactusbraspace.com/lal/.

Gemini Ink

Readers and Writers: Today and Tomorrow
San Antonio, Texas

Gemini Ink Honored Carmen Tafolla
at the literary organization’s annual
INKstravaganza Gala
Friday 6 September at Pearl Stable
For more info visit www.geminiink.org

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 www.geminiink.org.

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Featured Poem

Secret Missions of San Antonio
Robert Bonazzi

Studio A
I
Mockingbirds tutor this parrot in the outlandish art of imitation—
infinite birdsong inhabited by echoes.

Cacti pray to sun gods with upraised needles of blood-juiced leaves,
chewed to near symmetry by anonymous insects.

II
No matter how pots are re-arranged, light breaks in. Praise its palette subtly bathing the dark verandah.

Painted clouds shifting unnoticed above our stupendous fall from grace.

III
Confident cat Dino knows his name, turns to go out the door. His bookmark tail extends beyond a seven syllable vocabulary.

Alley tom scratches to enter, brief black grunt counterpointing long white purr of street thesaurus.

From this low promontory silent felinity disappears to prowl beneath a steep flight of stairs.

Robert Bonazzi was born in New York City in 1942, but grew up in Houston. He graduated with a BA in English in 1965 from the University of Houston, where he taught English while completing course work for an MA degree. He did not write a thesis because he had decided against an academic career. He moved to Brooklyn to teach high school English and write. His first book of poems, Living the Borrowed Life, was published by New Rivers Press in 1972. During this same period, he was editor of Latitudes Press (1966-2000), publishing anthologies of fiction that included Russell Banks, Stephen Dixon, Alvin Greenberg, Marvin Cohen, and Charles Baxter, who later published with mainstream publishers. After a year in Mexico City, he rejoined the Texas literary scene. His fifth book of poems, Maestro of Solitude (Wings Press), was a nominee for the poetry award from the Texas Institute of Letters in 2008. His acclaimed biography, Man in the Mirror (Orbis 1997), sold 80,000 copies and is now an eBook from Wings. As executor for the estate of John Howard Griffin, he has edited a dozen books by the late author—for Wings, Orbis, and publishers in Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, and the UK. He has lived in San Antonio since 2003, and writes a column, Poetic Diversity, for the San Antonio Express-News. His most recent book of poems, The Scribbling Cure, was published by Pecan Grove Press in 2013.
The fourth of seven children, Benjamin Alire Sáenz was born in Old Picacho, New Mexico, on 16 August 1954. He is an award-winning American poet, novelist, and writer of young adult and children’s books. After earning his BA in humanities and philosophy, he studied theology at the University of Louvain, Belgium, and served as a priest in El Paso, Texas, for several years before leaving the priesthood. In 1985 he returned to school to study English and creative writing at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he earned an MA in creative writing, before enrolling in the University of Iowa’s PhD program in American literature. A year later, he was awarded a Wallace E. Stegner fellowship. He entered the PhD program at Stanford University where, under the guidance of Denise Levertov, he completed his first book of poems, Calendar of Dust, which won an American Book Award in 1992. Before completing his PhD, he moved back to the border and began teaching at the University of Texas at El Paso in the bilingual MFA program. His first novel, Carry Me Like Water, which brought together the Victorian novel and the Latin American tradition of magical realism, received much critical attention. He is the co-host, with Daniel Chacón, of the KTEP-produced radio and online show on writers and writing, Words on a Wire. In 2013, he won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club, the first Latino writer ever to win the award. He also won two awards at the 2013 Lambda Literary Awards, in the categories of gay male fiction for Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club and children’s/young adult for Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe.

Mo H Saidi: As an award winning author facing the popularity of eBooks, do you foresee a complete shift from print and hardcopy to electronic publication in the near future? Benjamin Alire Sáenz: No, not in the foreseeable future. Literary books, while they do not sell in the millions, remain popular with readers who remain committed to reading literature. I don’t think “the book” will ever become extinct. Instead, I think books will always have an audience and there will always be a market for them—even if that market is a small—small compared to the population. If you think about it, people still buy vinyl records. There’s still a market for that. A small market, but a market nonetheless. In addition, I don’t think that there’s a battle between eBooks and real books. The content is the same. And if some people find eBooks more convenient, I don’t see a problem with that. I’ve had a lot of people tell me they download my books on their contraptions. “Too bad you can’t sign my book,” they quip. But they’re my readers, and who am I to criticize the way they choose to read my books?

You have won numerous awards for your work, including the Pen/Faulkner, the Americas Book Award, the Paterson Book Prize, and the J Hunt Award, to name a few. Which award has meant most for you? Every award has meant a great deal to me. I don’t feel as if I’m entitled to win awards. I write what I need to write, and awards are gifts. I’m always grateful for them. And I mean I’m truly grateful. I think receiving a Wallace Stegner Fellowship in poetry at Stanford University truly changed my life. I think that fellowship launched my literary career—and I was blessed to work with a mentor who championed my work, Denise Levertov. I also think the PEN/Faulkner has changed my career and my life. Those two awards are like bookends on the shelf that is my life. I wish literary awards didn’t matter—but they do. Awards give you a readership, and that is all a writer wants.

You are one in a long sequence of men who left the priesthood to become writers. What ultimately turned you off from the church and moved you into the secular world? Sometimes flawed men like me misread their vocations. I’ve taken a crooked road to reach my true vocation. I was meant to be a writer, not a priest. I had to discover that the hard way. And actually I don’t make a distinction between “the church” and the “secular world.” It’s just that the church for me is the world I live in.

Your poetry is universal and does not side with right or left, radical or conservative agendas. How should poets deal with the social issues of their day? I guess I don’t agree with your assessment of my work. I’m very left in my politics, and I have always assumed that my readers understand that. But this is the thing: I don’t do rants. I don’t lecture people. I write about life as I live it, as I experience it. So perhaps it doesn’t seem to some readers that I’m “political.” But everything about me is political. And certainly, conservatives don’t read me. I’m everything they hate: I’m gay, I’m Latino, and I hate guns.

Perusing your work, I noted you were 54 years old before you acknowledged your sexual orientation. Why was it necessary for you to disclose that? It’s not as if I made an announcement over a loudspeaker. I just became myself. And being myself, my sexual orientation appeared in my work. It’s as simple and as complicated as that. It took me a long time to accept myself for complicated reasons. There’s a featured article in the August issue of The Texas Monthly that goes into my personal difficulties, but as extroverted as I am, I don’t like to talk about it very much. I’m not ashamed of being gay—not anymore. But I will say this: I am a man. And like any man, I just want to be free to, as the Declaration of Independence puts it, pursue happiness. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Gay rights have recently taken some significant steps forward. Even the new pope treats the issue pragmatically when he says, “Who am I to judge gay persons?” What are the dynamics of this huge revolution in accepting human sexual variations? I’d like to think that our society is finally growing up. We’re going through growing pains. What I like about young people is that most of them don’t give a damn about sexuality—though there are still some very closed-minded people who think that straight people have inherited the earth. Where do they think gay people came from? Gay people were born to heterosexual couples. Gay people are born into families. And it makes me more than a little bit angry when people speak of sexuality as a choice. Sexual orientation is not a choice. And I do not consider myself to be a sexual deviant, nor do I think I am less moral than straight men. And you can’t blame the divorce rate among straight men and women on gay people. The Defense of Marriage Act is beyond ridiculous.

Given the advances in technology having to do with writing and teaching, are you optimistic about the future of poetry in America?
Poetry will always be on the margins of American culture. I don’t think this will ever change. If Walt Whitman couldn’t change the poetry scene in America, than nobody can.

You have said many of the scenes of racial injustice in your books come from your personal experience facing racism as a youngster. Why did you come back to notoriously racist Texas, and why are you staying there?
To begin with, El Paso is not really Texas. We live in a different time zone, we have mountains, and we vote for Democrats. And we have real Mexican food. El Paso is border town that is infinitely more sophisticated and open than the rest of Texas. I know that the rest of Texas considers us to be a little less than nothing, but as far as I’m concerned, at least there are no vestiges of the Old South in the city I live in—and that’s not something San Antonio can say. I love San Antonio, but there is a lot of Old South still lurking around in your beautiful city.

El Paso has given me my voice and I’m not about to turn my back on the people who have taught me how to speak. El Paso, simply put, is not a racist town. The rest of Texas has a lot to answer for.

In the history of our republic, America has been unkind to many immigrant groups. At a San Antonio Public Library event earlier this year, you noted that the re-enforcement of the Mexican-American border is promoted only to stop poor hard-working immigrants from crossing, while we continue with special incentives for wealthy individuals who arrive on private or commercial planes. How do you think we should manage the border?
I don’t have an answer to that question. I live in a country that is incapable of being honest about its public policies. We are still being held hostage by the opinions of citizens of a few states. Those citizens are living in the past, and they refuse to look at the future. They refuse to build a future. Texas will eventually become a permanently Democratic state. And when that day comes—and it will come—the right wing will never win another national election again. Immigration policies must change, but that change, unfortunately, is up to our representatives. Most of the people we elect are unbelievably unintelligent.

Do you believe the election of the first African-American president in 2008 has reduced the racial conflicts in the United States?
It doesn’t hurt—but in the end, we have a long way to go. The problem is that poor Black people are still as poor as they ever were. In fact, poor people in general are just getting poorer. Again, our lawmakers are not looking out for the interests of the common person. And they have the gall to pretend to speak for the American people.

In your fifth book of poems What Remains (Copper Canyon Press, 2010), you write eloquently about the contrast between the desert’s austere beauty and the brutality of border politics. Are you optimistic that humanity will eventually overcome its beastly cruelty?
No. I’m not optimistic. The evidence is clear: we are in love with violence. We love our guns in this country more than we love human beings and dogs. We should be ashamed of ourselves, but shame is not a part of the language of the NRA. The political success of the NRA in this country is living proof that we are still clinging to barbarism. There is nothing civil about gun culture. There are so many ironies in American culture. The Supreme court rules that a corporation is a human being and has all the rights of an individual. How can I, as an individual, compete with a corporation? And courts are ruling that unions don’t have a right to organize and that doesn’t hamper their freedom of speech.

Your work spans several literary genres including children’s and young adult books. What motivated you to produce such an impressive spectrum of work, and what is your favorite literary genre?
Well, I’m a writer. A writer writes, and sometimes the genre isn’t the most important thing. The vehicle you take to drive somewhere doesn’t always matter. That said, I love poetry.

Can you describe for us how you go about creating your work?
It’s hard to describe, but I work and live in my head. I don’t begin working on anything unless I have most of it in my head. I walk a lot. That’s how I write. I walk.

We would like to publish a recent poem from you; would you honor us with a submission?
Here is the poem:

Bathing in the Light, A Man
Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Because he does not trust his eyes because he believes in art and paintings and black and white photography—the feel of charcoal on his fingers as he rubs it onto the rough paper because he believes in the canvas and the paint and the brush because he believes in the words he has written and the words he is writing at this very moment more than in the things he sees more than in the women and in the men he has touched and has loved because he has come to understand that seeing is a beautiful and complicated and impossible thing that can never be understood or explained and knows too that he cannot even trust his own eyes and must live in his own blindness because he’s seen too much and felt too much and knows now that he cannot trust his own body and its deceitful and impossible desires so how can he begin to trust his own memory because he is tired of sitting in front of a screen his still nimble fingers numb from touching a keyboard for hours on end as if it were a piano banging out sad and angry notes that are struggling to become a song because he is tired of words owning him telling him what to do what to say but the words—the words—one day he will put them together in such a way and form a sentence that will beat like the wings of a bird and in that beating, beating, beating, he will see.

He walks around the city with a camera.
He listens to the sound of his own footsteps.
It has been a cold winter.
One cold front has followed another.
Today, hints of green, the afternoon bathed in light again.
He yearns to live on that line where the shadows begin.

Thank you very much.
Kevin Young
November 15, 2013—7:30 p.m.
Co-sponsored by Dr. Joycelyn Moody, Sue E. Denman Distinguished Chair in American Literature


Book Review

Bedrock
by Bonnie Lyons
Reviewed by James R. Adair

Bedrock, as have her commitments to her family and her Jewish faith. Bedrock is organized into three sections, which roughly correspond to eras in the author’s life—childhood, early adulthood, and later years—but the ghosts of grandparents and parents and the memory of a sister lost much too young permeate every section of the book. Despite not infrequent references to death, Bedrock can be characterized as a celebration of life: the life of the author, to be sure, but also life in general, available to anyone who reads the lyrical sentences that fill every page.

Two poems remind me of my own life experiences and interactions with my daughter. “Two Red Balloons” captures the impact that toy balloons—inexpensive baubles to most adults—can have on children (my daughter’s balloon was yellow). “To My Co-Journer as He Approaches 64” recalls a father telling the stories of Odysseus to his seven-year-old daughter, her eyes wide with amazement at the hero’s exploits.

Lyons’ Jewish faith finds expression in many of her poems. “Rose and Iola” describes her grandmother’s transition from Minsk to New York and her housekeeper’s travails in antisemitic Miami. In “Home Economics” her grandmother tells her, “in my day when a Jew married / a non-Jew we sat shiva.”

The centrality of family in Lyons’ poetry is evident as well. Childhood defiance (sneaking out to buy her first bra at age twelve, challenging traditional sexual mores as a teenager) sits side by side with fond memories of building tents out of blankets in the bedroom and reminiscences of the toll age inevitably takes on grandparents, parents, and finally oneself. And the dogs: she doesn’t forget her dogs, Sancho, Max, and Zorba!

One of the most poignant passages is in a poem entitled “At Kennedy Airport,” where she describes a meeting between her father and herself:

but meeting at the airport
after my sister died
we fell into each other’s shaking arms
stretched open our mouths to howl
and no sound came out
even Lear’s five-fold never
five words too many.

The poems in Bedrock are rich in humor, laced with heartache, and filled with love. They reflect a life well-lived, with adventures, like those of Tennyson’s Ulysses, yet to come. As in her previously published books of poetry, Lyons shows that she is a poetic voice that calls out to be heard, a voice crying not so much in the wilderness as in the streets of some of the great cities in America. In Bedrock we hear Lyons say with resolve, “Hineni, I am here!”
UTSA Featured Poet: Steven G. Kellman

Just Collecting Dust

It’s the stamp
not the letter

It’s the box
not the match

It’s the jug
not the wine

It’s the shaker
not the pepper

It’s the card
not the gum

It’s the thimble
not the thread

It’s the can
not the soup

It’s the pen
not the ink

It’s the gun
not the bullet

It’s the clock
not the time

---

Steven G. Kellman is the author of Redemption: The Life of Henry Roth (Norton), The Translingual Imagination (Nebraska), and The Self-Begetting Novel (Columbia) and editor of M.E. Ravage’s 1917 memoir An American in the Making (Rutgers). He is a professor of comparative literature at the University of Texas at San Antonio.
No Books, No Problem  
Bexar County Pushes the Paradigm Forward with BiblioTech  
Santo Randazzo

On September 14, 2013, Bexar County celebrated the grand opening of the nation’s first wholly digital public library, BiblioTech. BiblioTech is more than just an internet café. It is a full public branch library in Bexar County that offers an impressive array of amenities normally associated with standard libraries such as spaces that can be reserved (by the public) for meetings or study sessions, as well as others made available for reading to children; however, the library features no physical books. In lieu of physical books, patrons at the digital library (3505 Pleasanton Road) have access to approximately 10,000 eBooks and an inventory of compatible technological platforms. Visitors have access to laptop and desktop computers, as well as tablets. E-readers are available for check-out. The facility also offers free Internet service.

BiblioTech’s digital platform is unprecedented and, as a result, has become a vanguard program garnering national attention at a time when public coffers are depleted. A poll from April 24, 2013, shows that 62% of libraries report that they are the sole source of free Internet and computer access in their communities. According to an article, “BiblioTech on Track to open Sept. 14” in mySA on September 9, 2013, the BiblioTech system was built specifically in an area of south San Antonio where 75% of residents have no access to the Internet. For citizens of Bexar County and residents of the Greater San Antonio area, there is much to be optimistic about when considering BiblioTech. Not only is the digital library a groundbreaking effort, both technologically and economically, it also addresses a distinct public need for library resources in San Antonio. With BiblioTech, Bexar County takes an auspicious jump forward in the inevitable paradigm shift of the public library and its role in the community and sets a distinguished example for innovative public policy as a solution to fiscal constraints. For more info on the Bexar County Digital Library, visit: bexarbibliotech.org/about-biblio-tech.

Who Publishes eBooks in San Antonio?

UTSA: The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) has published its first e-book in 2013 (utsa.edu/today/2013/08/ebook.html) The digital book is a collection of academic papers, videos, and interactive images from a conference hosted by the UTSA Department of Physics and Astronomy in November 2012 that brought together some of the world’s top astronomers.

Wings Press: Wings Press began publishing eBooks almost as soon as the formats were established, which led the Huffington Post to cite Wings as being in the forefront of independent publishers in this area. All new Wings Press books are published simultaneously in paper and all eBook formats: ePub, Kindle, and PDFs for library use. For the last two years Wings has been issuing its backlist as eBooks also. As of fall 2013, Wings has ninety-three eBook titles available, including its first first standalone eBook, Bill Wright’s A Bridge from Darkness to Light: Thirteen Young Photographers Explore Their Afghanistan.

Books Make Their Move  
from “The Bestselling E-books of 2012” by Daisy Maryles

A glance at the numbers of eBook sales over the past year indicates that the book business is moving quickly into the digital marketplace. While digital book sales are still lower than sales of printed books for almost all titles (but Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn is an exception!), the gap is narrowing every year. More and more people are taking advantage of the convenience of digital readers and the lower cost of eBooks.

Publishers Weekly sent a survey to publishers requesting eBook sales for 2012, and the results of the survey indicate a changed landscape in the book publishing arena. Not surprisingly, most of the bestselling eBooks are by bestselling print authors, and backlist titles comprise a substantial number of titles on the eBook bestseller list, but sales of eBooks as a percentage of total sales are growing rapidly. Following is a sample of the top eBooks in terms of sales for 2012.

15 Million+ for All Three
Fifty Shades Darker: Book Two. E.L. James. Vintage
Fifty Shades Freed: Book Three. E.L. James. Vintage

One Million+

850,000+
Fifty Shades Trilogy Bundle. E.L. James. Vintage
Bared to You. Sylvia Day. Berkley

500,000+
The Racketeer. John Grisham. Doubleday
Reflected in You. Sylvia Day. Berkley
The Lucky One. Nicholas Sparks. Grand Central

400,000+
No Easy Day. Mark Owen. Dutton
Defending Jacob. William Landay. Delacorte
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo: Book 1 of the Millennium Trilogy. Stieg Larsson. Vintage
A Game of Thrones. George R.R. Martin. Bantam
11/22/63: A Novel. Stephen King. Scribner (441,152)
The Innocent. David Baldacci. Grand Central (432,098)
The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest: Book 3 of the Millennium Trilogy. Stieg Larsson. Vintage
The Last Boyfriend. Nora Roberts. Berkley
The Help. Kathryn Stockett. Berkley
A Dance with the Dragons. George R.R. Martin. Bantam

Art in the City

Gallery Nord Presents

Photography Exhibition:
C. Maui Agrawal, Julius Gribou, and Ricardo Romo
and
Fiber Artists of San Antonio
2013 Annual Juried Exhibition

This photography exhibit features the work of three UTSA administrators: Ricardo Romo, president; Julius Gribou, executive vice provost; and C. Mauli Agrawal, interim vice president for research. The exhibit’s curator Arturo Infante Almeida states that the pieces illuminate culture awash in color, custom, and tradition, gracefully silent vistas made timeless by light and shadow, transient moments under eternal skies. All are testament to the enduring power of the photographic image as a wordless chronicle of beauty, time, and space. Dr. Ricardo Romo, the fifth president of the University of Texas at San Antonio and a San Antonio native, is largely credited with leading the university towards becoming a premier research facility. Since he took leadership in 1999, the enrollment has grown enormously and his contribution to the university is undisputed. His undeniable talent and rising popularity as a fine arts photographer has also been established, with shows at local galleries and institutions like the Witte Museum and the Institute of Texan Cultures, and even an international exhibition of his work in China.

Photography of Julie Banks

Photography is a moment in time captured in one quick second, which documents the essence of the moment for all to see, for generations to come. To see more of her work, please visit www.jvphotographystudio.com.

McNay Art Museum

Fall 2013 Exhibitions

CUT! Costume and the Cinema
October 2–January 19

Onstage! Costume Design and the Theatre
September 4–January 5

The Nightmare before Christmas
September 4–January 5

C. Thomas Wright: Patron and Collector
September 25–January 12

ARTMATTERS 15:
Rosalyn Schwartz: A Brief History of Seduction
October 2–January 19

Native Son: Prints and Drawings by Luis A. Jiménez Jr.
October 9–January 19

San Antonio Museum of Art

Upcoming Exhibitions

Fray Antonio Margil de Jesús: “Patron Saint of Texas”

In 1720, Fray Antonio Margil de Jesús (1657-1726) founded San Antonio’s flagship mission, Misión San José y San Miguel de Aguayo. This humble man, who signed himself “La Misma Nada” (Nothingness Itself), was famous during his lifetime as an exemplary Franciscan friar, a devoted evangelist, a gifted scholar of indigenous languages, and a fearless worker for the Church.

Born in Valencia, Spain, Fray Margil entered the Franciscan Order in 1673. A decade later, he traveled to Mexico and became a founding member of the famous Franciscan Missionary College of Santa Cruz in Querétaro, later serving as its president. Fr. Margil’s true devotion, however, was to apostolic fieldwork, and soon he traveled south to Central America. After working diligently with the indigenous peoples of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Yucatán, and Guatemala, Fr. Margil returned to Mexico to found the Apostolic College of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Zacatecas (1706). From there, he set out to establish missions in northern New Spain, especially in parts of Coahuila, Nuevo León and in what is now Texas. Fr. Margil founded several missions in east Texas, but when forced from east Texas by a coalition of French and Native American forces, he moved to San Antonio, where he established Mission San José. See more at www.samuseum.org/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/525-father-margil/.

Voices de la Luna, 15 October 2013
News & Notes

Seamus Heaney (1939–2013)

Seamus Heaney, 1995 Nobel Laureate in literature, died Aug 30 at the age of 74. A Roman Catholic who was born in Northern Ireland and lived much of his life in Dublin, Heaney was the author of numerous collections of poetry, essays, and dramatic works. Much of his work reflected the strife that afflicted the Emerald Isle over the course of his life. An ardent supporter of the Irish Republican cause (“Be advised, my passport’s green / No glass of ours was ever raised / To toast the Queen”), he nevertheless acknowledged English as well as Irish literary heritage in his own work. He is one of the modern poets, not only of Ireland, but of the entire English-speaking world and beyond. For more, see www.nytimes.com/2013/08/31/arts/seamus-heaney-acclaimed-irish-poet-dies-at-74.html.

Elmore Leonard (1925–2013)

Elmore Leonard started out writing westerns (including the short story “Three-Ten to Yuma”), but he made his name with his gritty, humor-filled crime novels—many of which have been made into movies—such as Get Shorty, Out of Sight, Mr. Majestyk, and Rum Punch (translated to the silver screen as Jackie Brown). Winner of the Grand Master Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America and the 2012 National Book Award Medal for Distinguished Contribution, Leonard was still working at the time of his death, both with the FX series Justified (inspired by some of his works) and as executive producer of the forthcoming film The Switch, based on one of his novels. Leonard was 87.

CD Review

Miriam Talks Back
And Other Voices from the Hebrew Scriptures
by Bonnie Lyons
Reviewed by James R. Adair

On this audio CD, Lyons reads many poems inspired by the women of the Hebrew Bible, stories told with Lyons’ characteristic charm and humor. Most poems are from her 2004 book In Other Words (Pecan Grove). When I assigned students in my Bible as Literature class to read a selection of poems from In Other Words, they unanimously claimed the poems as their favorite readings of the semester. The CD is available from materialmedia.net.

Signed Confessions: Stories
by Tom Walker
from www.amazon.com

Guilt and a desperate need to repent drive the antiheroes in Tom Walker’s dark (and often darkly funny) stories: • A gullible journalist falls for the 40-year-old stripper he profiles in a magazine. • A faithless husband abandons his family and joins a support group for lost souls. • A merciless prosecuting attorney grapples with the suicide of his gay son. • An aging misanthrope must make amends to five former victims. • An egoistic naval hero is haunted by apparitions of his dead wife and a mysterious little girl. The seven tales in Signed Confessions measure how far guilty men will go to obtain a forgiveness no one can grant but themselves.

San Antonio native Tom Walker attended Central Catholic High School, San Antonio College, and the University of Texas at Austin. In the sixties he moved to Manhattan and worked as an editor for Prentice Hall Publishers in New Jersey. In the seventies he edited and regularly contributed to SA: The Magazine of San Antonio before becoming editor of Southwest Airlines Magazine and then Continental Airlines Magazine.

The Wild Swans at Coole
William Butler Yeats

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All’s changed since I, hearing at twilight,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake’s edge or pool
Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?
Words before Dawn
Poems
by William Wenthe
from lsupress.org/books/detail/words-before-dawn/

William Wenthe’s third collection begins in the domestic realm then moves outward in subject and place—to a bird market in Paris, the Jaffa Gate in Old Jerusalem, the Chain Bridge in Budapest—before returning to the familial. The poet recalls his own cherished experiences of fatherhood: rocking his infant daughter in the early morning, lying with her outside on a pink flannel sheet, and watching her joyous reaction to the sight of roses.

While actively engaged in the artist’s struggle to represent reality, Wenthe draws attention to the particular, to moments and events that seem to exist beyond thoughts and words. In “Uhte,” Wenthe reflects on the Old English name for the hour before dawn: “that word / has haunted me—wondering how that hour / had first called forth a need / to be distinguished by a sound.”

In well-crafted free verse, traditional meter and rhyme, prose poems, and nonce forms, Wenthe meditates on family, language, art, history, and the natural world, striving to find words to capture the richness of life.

In Early Spring
William Wenthe
from Birds of Hoboken, Orchises Press, 1995

Midnight. The tentative prickings of rain.
Alone and wind.

How I count on
the return of things—rain, and bird,
the hard bud, the catkin—
so why won’t I return?
Why haven’t I written the friend

I grew up with, eighteen years?
Gone west: I saw him last, alcoholic,
tormented with his stories,
saying, “I’ve been teaching myself to remember.”

In the dark rain, where does the phoebe go?
It’s been a year
since I thought of that lyric,
asking the wind to come back,
that the small rain down can rain …

In my bed again, wind
breathing in the window’s ear.

William Wenthe is the author of three books of poetry. He has received fellowships from the NEA and the Texas Commission on the Arts, as well as Pushcart Prizes; he teaches poetry at Texas Tech University. For more info, please visit www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/wenthe.

Art in the City
San Antonio Symphony
www.sasymphony.org

The 2013-2014 season is Maestro Sebastian Lang-Lessing’s fourth season as music director. The season, which opens in October, “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. “As the winter festival grows each year, we felt the next appropriate step was to invite The Opera San Antonio for what we are sure will be a fabulous co-presentation of this amazing opera.”

“The season will open with one of the world’s most popular orchestral works, Pictures at an Exhibition, and will include numerous other fabulous orchestral works,” said Lang-Lessing. “We are once again bringing some incredible soloists to San Antonio who will perform some fantastic concerts,” he continued. “Audiences will be astounded by the incredible talent and musicianship of pianist Nicholas Angelich, cellist Jian Wang, and Norwegian trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth, to name just a few.”

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

Magical Realism Studio
Fine Art Photography
by Ramin Samandari
www.magicalrealismstudio.com

Born in 1960 in Tehran, Iran, Samandari emigrated from Iran to the United States in 1978 and makes his home in San Antonio, Texas. A versatile artist working with photographic and digital imaging processes, Samandari investigates the human form in relation to other forms, space, and the intangible forces of time, place and history.

Samandari writes, “I started my photographic journey in the darkroom in the mid-eighties. During the first sixteen or seventeen years I experimented with a variety of non-conventional wet processes. By the early twenty-first century I transitioned into digital photography. I have taught darkroom photography at the Southwest School of Art, and since 2008 I have been teaching digital photography.”
Youth Poems and Prose

All the contributors to Youth Poems and Prose in this issue are middle school students in the Harlandale ISD, San Antonio.

More
Star B.C.

Sometimes I wish I could be free in other places, not just this silly room. But what will people think? It’s just so unfair to stay locked up. Sure I love my room but I wish I could see more of life. Nothing specific, just life … probably just life itself. I know there’s gotta be more outside this closed door.

Abby and Jake
Gabrielle C.

Today is Abby’s one-year anniversary with Jake, her boyfriend. They are going to the meadow where they had their first date. It’s a long drive, so Abby decides to leave early. Abby gets there before Jake does. She decides to take a picture of the meadow. She climbs up the mountain connected to the meadow and finally gets to the perfect position. She can see Jake’s truck in the distance. She snaps the picture and when she does, an earthquake occurs which causes a rock avalanche. Abby falls into a large crevasse with rocks and dirt raining over her. She feels a small shock. She thinks it is an aftershock but realizes it is a large boulder stuck in the crevasse. Abby soon realizes there is no way out. That thought leaves her mind in an instant. Now all she can think about is if Jake is ok. Is he even alive? Jake rises from his truck with blood dripping from his forehead. He doesn’t notice the blood. His only thoughts are about Abby.

My Happy Place
Viviana Q.

A field filled with blossoming flowers with green grass as far as the eye can see. A lot of birds in the distance singing and chirping. The sun shining high as can be. The wind blowing through the flowers causing them to dance in the air. Everything having purpose and also care.

Ocean
Alyssa M.

The sounds of waves crashing fills the air while the smell of salt water fills my lungs.

The calmness of the ocean relaxes me as the sun rises. There are not many people as we walk along the shore.

I enjoy the company of my family as we hunt for seashells along the moist sand.

Here is where I can be free and not have to stress. Where I can be the real me and just rest.

Nature
Gabriela Elizalde

As the chirping of birds lights up the day speeding cars run away to reflect from the glass an amazing sight the rush of wind through my hair a sudden rush of leaves wind blowing through the trees

That was all I could see
Outside
Victoria Treviño

Sun shining on me
Oh how I feel free
Birds chirping songs
for a new day
by a bay
Animals cheer
with no fear
Oh what a wonderful day

Tree leaves blow in the breeze
for us to breathe
I love the outdoors
of the forest floor

My Free Place
Lynnette M.

My horse and I,
we can go anywhere,
but here I feel fine.

The warm sunlight on my face,
it doesn’t bother me at all.
Just the two of us
together
the flowers, the sheep, the cows, the pigs, and the chicks.

It’s good to be here.
It’s where I want to be.
It’s what I am.
I grew up here.
I love this place.
Boots, a saddle and a hat
that’s all I need.

Cliff View
Ryan L.

The ground scattered with rocks
of all sizes, the higher we go the
steeper it gets, hope you’re a good climber

As we get higher, the trees start
to go away, you better bundle up,
because on top you can grab your sleigh

Lower, as we push to take a few
more steps, the view we see is
beautiful just as the
sun sets

A Beautiful Spring Day
Monique Rodriguez-Martinez

It’s such a beautiful spring day,
the breeze feels so cold and so fresh,
lovely flowers sway so softly,
the grass feels so soft and looks so green.

Birds are singing so peacefully,
the sun is shining so beautifully,
so many butterflies fly around me,
a double rainbow before my eyes.

No ants crawling on me,
I’m lying down in the soft grass,
I feel so relaxed,
I’m going to take a catnap now,
I’m dreaming of the same scene,
it sounds like angel music is playing.

I wake up and my family is here
to have a picnic with me.

Birds sing again,
the breeze is a little warmer,
it’s a gorgeous spring day!

I Went Outside
Trevor D.

It was cold inside,
So I went out
and the sun warmed me in a
second. I saw the
birds soaring up so
high, I got dizzy
looking at
them. So I lay
in the nice green
grass, looking at the
big blue sky. I saw
the little red
ants marching
by. I looked
at the big white clouds
and I fell asleep. On a
nice warm sunny day
lying on the nice
green grass.
Select Poems

September Notebook
Nicole Cooley

Like the magic porridge that takes
over the town, pours through the village,
fills, then empties, the streets—

It swallows everything in September and it happens twice

First, in New York the burning
seeped under our apartment door, into the window seams.
The sharp smell threaded through
my daughter’s hair for days.

I pressed
my lips to her head.

Four years later in New Orleans
water surges over, under,
wrenches houses off stone foundations.
The floodwall cracks,
an explosion of gunfire.
Water surges around my parents’ house.

I read that story to my daughter because

once upon a time there were two Septembers in two cities:
the one of the towers on fire
and the one of floodwaters rising

once upon a time my mother read it to me
when we leaned together in my canopy bed
when outside the window over the levee
the river was all flat green and quiet.

Now someone else is reading me the story. I crawl up
on her lap but she pushes me off and says:

Don’t shut your eyes just because you can’t watch
TV: the jumping couples from windows of Tower One,

the families, attics split open, in the Lower Nine, waiting for rescue.

Once upon a time it was the end of August and I
was on the phone with my parents, begging them to leave the city.

Fast forward to my parents’ repeated answer:
this is our home.

I was telling my parents to go to the Superdome.

My mother saying: you are sending us to a watery grave.

Today’s American History Lesson, the voice says:
Once upon a time in 1927 white men blew up the Industrial canal.

With a loud crack, they breached the levees.
They wanted to drive the black families out.

So when my daughter’s class gathers at the flagpole for
a “patriotic song” “in commemoration” of “the event”—
the sky is a pure blue bowl
capable of holding nothing.

Here is the weather, the voice says, New York’s bright sky in both
Septembers.
Ever since, a clear early fall day is 9/11 weather.

I sit beside my mother on my bed.
I hold my daughter on my lap.

When the peasants run and the porridge blankets the streets
who will save them?

My mother says, This is our home.

Today’s History Lesson: It swallows and swallows and swallows

I’d like to sit with her, Our Lady of the Breach.
Our Lady of the Burning City.
Our Lady of the Uncomforted.
I’d like to hold her hands down and whisper the lesson.

I’d like to force the floodwaters down her throat.

Arrival
Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

Smiling moon threads
Splash glowing amber

Live oaks flex
Muscular limbs

Stars pierce
Fine-tuned perceptions

Minutes left
Till silence reigns

The Friend revealed
Night humbly bows
What Did I Dream Last Night?—
An Empty Notebook—
*Thomas Pescatore*

Dreams are sleep piece
visions in the essential mind
fitting beneath those
of our mundane reality,
a fevered mirage going to
waste each night,
that’s its own sad
story—a mirror to our
crumbling thoughts—
reach for them, taste them on
tip of tongue and idea—they’re
out there stacking and falling,
filming and calling out—
ignored.

_Southeast of the Center of Everything_
*Bryce Milligan*

Southeast of the center of everything
you are raping the volcanoes:
the prince and princess of Mexico,
Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl,
Smoking Mountain and White Woman.
They are stripping their green gowns
from the sleeping lovers, leaving
their flanks naked to the sun.

Two thousand years Popo has held his peace,
watched one sun follow another—
cuarto sol, quinto sol, sexto sol,
watched mestizo follow Spaniard
follow Aztec follow Toltec.
He quenched his rage in molten stone,
she quenched her grief in virgin snow.

For centuries they slept undisturbed
beneath their mantles of green and white,
she in some cosmic absence, reclining
across a quarter of the horizon,
he fuming and restless, slowly
burning inside yet pleased to accept
the rainmakers’ small offerings
of fruit, tobacco, chipotles, a serape,
copal-scented prayers.

But now the rainmakers
have themselves gone to ground
como las chicharras and there is no one
to honor los poderes más viejos,
to keep the cycles of water and life.
Popo rumbles in his long sleep
as the chainsaws and bulldozers
denude his lover’s long limbs.

The Secret Thoughts of Inspector G. Lestrade
_*Kevin N. Power*_

Scotland Yard’s my work place, Lestrade is my name;
In the battle with crime I’ve garnered some fame;
I’ve risen through the ranks, I’m an inspector
And opinion has it I’m an ace detector;
Within the force I’m highly respected,
But mention Sherlock Holmes—I feel dejected.

To Holmes I’m only a plodding copper
Who must be saved from coming a cropper.
His patronising kindness drives me mad
And that he’s always right just makes me sad.
And yet I return, time and time again,
To get his advice on things beyond my ken.
With speed and zest he examines my case
And prevents me from getting egg on my face.
He dismantles my theories one by one
And that, let me tell you, is not much fun!
What’s worse, he gives me the credit and glory
When he solves the case and the press want the story.
He stays in the background, a smile on his lips
And that smile is worse than a lashing with whips.

It’s rumoured I may get a knighthood next year;
If I do, I know Holmes will silently jeer
And Watson—that scribbler—will write it all down;
Watson! How is it his nose is not brown!
If ever a man was sycophantic
It’s Watson when writing on Holmes’s antics!

I hate Holmes and Watson and wish they were dead—
But if they were I’ve a terrible dread
That if Holmes were not there with his eagle eye,
Crime figures could soar as high as the sky.
Yes, Sherlock Holmes is the bane of my life,
Worse than Moriarty or my nagging wife;
Yet maybe it’s better he stays in one piece,
An amateur helping us real police.
My thought as I near the end of my story:
Let Holmes do the work, let me get the glory.
Reflected glory is better than none:
I know that fact better than anyone!
Without Holmes I might still be on the beat,
Plodding in the rain on dingy dim-lit streets;
I owe him a lot, that’s why I hate him so,
But that’s a thing that no-one needs to know!

_Autumn_
*_Amy Lowell*_

All day I have watched the purple vine leaves
Fall into the water.
And now in the moonlight they still fall,
But each leaf is fringed with silver.
**Another Visitation**

_Bryce Milligan_

*Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

—Jesus, Matthew 7: 24

*Put it on stilts.*

—_Ms._ 21st Century

Old Joaquin’s seen the future.
She came to him last night,
one shoulder bare, hair a fright,
sandy-sandaled and ocean-eyed.
He says he came back to tell us all.
“I shall tell you all,” he said,
completamente formal,
next morning at the Taquería del Sol.
He couldn’t get over how the graceful young century’s eyes brimmed
*con nuestros dolores, tiempos, y las mareas*—tides that will not wait, cannot wait
to drown the barrier islands
and creep across the coastal plains
bringing the breakers to La Paloma Solitaria,
thirty miles inland, turning
cotton fields and orange orchards into salt marshes, arroyos into bayous.
“It’ll be sandy soon enough,” she told Joaquín.
He sold his truck that very week,
bought concrete and creosoted timbers.
“Elevation’s the new salvation”
he’d repeat mantra-like
as he sank shafts through the alluvium
to the bed rock, poured foundations
for twenty-foot piles that soared up
like stilt legs stalking the future
in his pasture’s chaparral.

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**Three Sentences**

_Vincent Spina_

One:
It’s what remains when the autopsy ends
but the results are inconclusive,
a space in the mind
when the lyrics and melody are gone,
like the movement that last streamlet of water,
sinking through the sand, leaves after the wave has washed back
—the rhythm a dream plants
in your mind, or a poem...waiting for its words.

Two:
It happens in stages, gradually, like a sycamore,
the pattern of its white branchings inscribed already into its genome,
now planted against a gray, late winter hillock
weeks before leaves may appear,

the way a coast anticipates the next high tide,
replete with red knots
and sandpipers eluding the waves
as they wash in following the wave path out,
as black-back seagulls watch
from rotting mooring posts

—sort of like God, though not
the run-away train banging through stations
bringing city walls down
on a dry plain as angry ram-horns
bleat in the distance;

but rather the hollow sense of things
that need not be filled:
the silence between the end of your last dream of night
and the suspect morning cough you need the next ten minutes to worry about,

which is only one knot
in a string of knots assigned to you
long ago (though you can’t know exactly when)
by someone (though you don’t know exactly whom),
—each knot, a bee sting

though you have stolen no honey nor stepped barefoot on any bee, and you say as
to the silence that, yes, this is exactly where you wished to be, and, yes,
there are wells of words still:

a child stumbling to
the top of a hummock, somewhere among
the first hundred steps his life has taken and raises
his arms to embrace the morning empty air,
and just when you think you have it, you don’t for the child is carried away.

Three:
All around, plovers and terns
have settled down along the pebbly beaches,
one there, one here, dozing, or looking about, or
grooming the barbs of a feather back into place,
and you remember they once used those quills
to write a letter or a postcard you may wish
to place in the mail this afternoon
and are now searching your pockets for an address.
Editors’ Poems

Demanding Autumn
Joan Strauch Seifert

A fresh coolness, just a hint—but yes, we feel a sudden swish. Leaves sway.

Now it’s gone.
We’re snared still in summer’s limbo; leaves cling to branches, tranquil.

Again that faint sway!
Did trees note the nudge?
And might it come again, a new whoosh?
With breath bated we wait.

Autumn, show us more than sublety; stop teasing!
Leaf-rustling’s not enough; distract the birds!
Make landing in the elms a challenge, cause them to perch anxiously, awaiting chill.

Alarm the squirrels with sudden gusts, distract their leaps from limb to limb, confuse their pecan hideaways with new snaps in the air.

Whip frenzy in the oaks, dizzy the doves with indecision—dizzy us with hope!
And scram the dreaded heat with gales, real gales!

A leaf flutters, then another.
A chill nip then, to bared arms.
It’s happening!

We crave to pen gleeful requiems to August, then grin and dance a jig among floating, swirling, twirling be-bopping, non-stopping, fancy-frenzied falling leaves.

I Held a Hummingbird in My Hand
James R. Adair

I held a hummingbird in my hand,
Its feet caught in the springs of an open garage door.
I pinched its legs between my thumb and forefinger,
Admiring its crimson throat,
Observing its rapidly beating heart,
As it waited patiently for freedom.
I walked out into the driveway
And tossed it skyward.
The hummingbird hesitated for an instant,
Then, engaging its motorized wings,
Sped along a shallow parabolic path
To the familiar surroundings of live oaks.

Another Ode to Autumn
Carol Coffee Reposa

This isn’t Keats:
Dew smudges windshields
Leaves clutter sidewalks
Acorns plop and clatter on pavement
Beneath parliaments of fowl
Chattering in hackberries.
Grackles squawk, strut on grass
In blue-black gaggles,
Querulous majorettes in mourning.
Clumsy pyramids of pumpkins
Monopolize parking lots
While a buzzard wheels ominously
Over a neighbor’s back yard.

Yet this time has its offbeat majesty:
Morning mist spirals off a field
In luminous plumes. A sapphire noon
Dazzles everything. Leaves float by
In their weightless waltz
Silence of afternoon
Broken now and then
By the dropping of a late-blooming rose
Or a sudden swirl of wings.
At dusk a firefly glides along our street,
Lighting lawns in sporadic bursts
Before Orion starts to glitter on the horizon
And a new moon curls above us
Like a sleeping child.

First published in Underground Musicians (Lamar University Press)—see p. 24 for Keats’ "Ode to Autumn.

Personal Beatitudes
Maripat Munley

Blessed are those who feel exiled in this world
They will embody the gift of belonging

Blessed are those who love deeply and are passionate
Their joy and sorrow will bring them alive

Blessed are those who soften what is rigid within
They will feel nourished and grow

Blessed are those who are free to bless others
They will be blest themselves

Blessed are those with authentic inner and outer selves
They will be wide-awake moment to moment

Blessed are the compassionate ones
They have power to heal our world

Blessed are those that endure oppression
They will emerge and fly

Voices de la Luna, 15 October 2013
**Poemas Internacionales**

**Dejad Que Pasen**  
*Amelia Denis de Icaza*

El poeta lucha, sin luchar, qué haría?  
Sin lucha y resistencia, no hay victoria  
ni el corazón del bardo sangraría  
para teñir los lauros de su gloria.

Paso a la juventud, dejad que vuele  
zalzando alegre sus primeros trinos  
si le quitáis las alas, cómo puede  
sin esa fuerza abandonar el nido?

Dejadle sus ideas, sus ensueños,  
larga es la lucha, ruda la batalla  
tiene la inspiración muchos bohemios  
que serán las lumbreras del mañana.

No olvidéis a Rubén al poeta niño  
que al preludiar sus infantiles cantos  
derSci ellas le sembraron el camino  
que atravesó con sus primeros pasos.

Dejad la juventud, sus gallas flores  
necesitan la sabia de la planta,  
no le quitéis sus bellas ilusiones  
dejadla con su fe, con su esperanza.

No lanzéis vuestro dardo envenenado  
sobre la juventud que ama y espera  
dejad que goce en el festín humano  
mientras la sombra de los años llega.

Yo me aparto dejándoles la senda,  
por saludarlos al pasar me inclino,  
y aquí en mi corazón tienen la ofrenda  
de aliento, de entusiasmo y de cariño.

No penséis en la crítica del sabio  
si hay luz y claridad en vuestra mente  
yo también he tenido mi calvario  
pero el que puede luchar todo lo vence.

Heroica juventud, alzad la frente  
el genio es luz irradiación divina  
el que lleve esta luz será el más fuerte  
para luchar en la sangrienta lidia.

No abandonéis cobardes el palenque  
la gloria ofrece al vencedor el premio  
dichosos los que llevan en la frente  
la corona simbólica del genio.

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**International Poems**

**Let It Come**  
*Amelia Denis de Icaza / translated by Gerard S. Robledo*

The poet struggles, without it what would one do?  
Without a struggle and opposition there is no victory,  
not even the heart of a bard would bleed  
to soil the laurels of his glory.

I pass on to the youth, set your first trills  
free to rise happily, if you remove  
your wings, how can you leave  
the nest without such power?

Give your ideas, your dreams,  
the struggle is long, the battle tough  
but it is the inspiration of many bohemians  
who will be the luminaries of tomorrow.

Do not forget Rubén, the poet child,  
who introduced your childish songs  
of brambles, those which you planted  
along the road crossing your first steps.

Leave the youth your flowers,  
you need the sap of the plant,  
do not withdraw your beautiful illusions,  
leave them with your faith, your hope.

Do not cast your poison dart  
on the youth who have love and hope,  
let them rejoice in the human banquet  
while the shadow of age arrives.

I will go leaving you a path,  
and in passing I will greet you and bow,  
and here in my heart there is an offering  
of inspiration, enthusiasm and affection.

Do not focus on the criticism of the sage  
if there is light and clarity in your mind.  
I too have had my own tribulations  
but he who can oppose all will prevail.

Heroic youth, raise your vanguard,  
the light of genius is divine irradiation.  
The bearer of this light will be the strongest  
to confront in the bloody battle.

Cowards, do not abandon the arena,  
glory offers the winner the prize,  
blessed are those who have been in the front:  
the symbolic crown of genius.
**Liberación**  
_Demetrio Fábrega_  

Voy atado a la vida como bestia a la noria, pisando, a cada vuelta, sobre mi propia huella, sin nada que me diga de un canto de victoria y viendo en el espacio brillar la misma estrella.

Un día—cualquier día—yo sentiré la extraña sensación de que se abre este círculo estrecho, sentiré una luz nueva que mi pupila baña y un grito de aleluya brotará de mi pecho.

---

**Huldigung an die Blume Jesus**  
_Hejo Müller_  

für die Malerin Ida Köhne

O Erd, herfür dies Blümlein bringt  
O Heiland, aus der Erden springt  
—Friedrich von Spee, 1622

Daß dich  

dieser wilde Garten  
meines Planeten Erde  
hat wachsen lassen!

Wo doch hier  

ediglich Not und Verbot regiert  
und Gier und Geifer eifern…

Daß du hier  

leben konntest  

dreißig Jahre…

---

**Homage to the Flower of Jesus**  
_Hejo Müller / translated by James Brandenburg_  

for the painter Ida Köhne

O Earth, bringing forth this little flower  
O Savior, spring forth on this earth  
—Friedrich von Spee, 1622

That this wild garden  
on my planet earth  
has allowed you  
to grow!

Here  

where only sorrow  
and suppression survive

Here  

where greed and spite  
compete…

That you could  

live here

For thirty years…

---

**St. Thérèse of Lisieux, O.C.D.**  
_The Little Flower of Jesus_

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**Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower**  
_San Antonio, Texas_
How much is an ounce of happiness?  
Life is a flower raised to the power of eternity.  
Let’s plant a tree on every corner of speech.

I need to stop writing your words, Sohrab,  
or my poems will look exactly like yours—and  
my devotion, even in translation,  
will get me arrested, as I already am,  
for your: My heart full of nostalgia  
for the dragonfly, and: The pure  
sound of love vaguely shedding its skin.  
See how easily I weave your lines into mine—  
Hafez, Rumi, Khayyam: that Persian tradition,
a whole other script, and all I do is fall  
in love with your squiggles and flourishes,  
your wet night of affection. Aroused,
I have to lay the book aside, storm off  
in a rush, calm myself in this still  
hovering morning moon, lose myself  
beyond the cemetery, the just-plowed  
field: the glare, the frost, the fog,  
asingle Glittering dew, wondering:  
how many gods are living nearby?  
How many birds are singing in my heart?  
How many springs did I bargain for?
Genial, courteous, shy, retiring, never  
made, living with your mother and sister,  
attired in Japanese sandals, casual,
the way your poems can travel  
comfortably from one language to another:  
I am close to the beginning of the earth.

I had never known two poplars to be enemies.  
In order to compose, you needed the space  
the earth’s canvas could provide, and the solitude,  
nothing—no one—in the way of that lucidity:  
eyes should be washed to see in a different way.  
And it’s true: we want our life clarified,
we want our relations to reveal themselves  
for what they absolutely are, in all their dark  
complexities, their wounds, their terrors.
or weave my words into the water of your words, or visa versa—it would be a good thing, we say, if the seeds of a person’s heart were visible

as the pomegranate seeds and I’m nodding to the rhythm of the neighbor’s cow mooing its one song: one must be a source and a way to a source. One must come upon a place where one can say: why should I leave this place? One could do worse than spend a spring evening with you, after supper, the light lingering, the sweet scents of lilacs signaling the summer air to crash down its eternities. Sohrab,

you write my secret book I hide from everyone, yet I read it everyday when I am most alone, most alone, and in love.

Philip Terman is the author of six books of poetry: What Survives (Sow’s Ear Press, 1993), The House of Sages (Mammoth Press, 1998), Greatest Hits (Pudding House Press, 2005), Book of the Unbroken Days (Mammoth Press, 2005), Rabbis of the Air (Autumn House Press, 2007), and The Torah Garden (Autumn House Press, 2011). His poems have appeared in several publications, including Poetry Magazine, The Georgia Review, The Forward, and The Sun Magazine. He has received the Anna Davidson Rosenberg Award for Poems on the Jewish Experience. He co-directs the Chautauqua Writers’ Festival, is a contributing editor for the journal Chautauqua, and is a professor of English at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

That Someone
Tom Keene

who plunged us into awareness unimagined,

that particular teacher, parent, partner,

a shock wave impacting our doing and being,

waking us to ourselves and who we are inside.

Their presence – even their memory – startles us into declaring over and over:
Truth Sounds,
Courage Rises,
Love Is.

They become our Moses and Buddha, Socrates and Jesus, Mohammed and Gandhi.

A birth cry of the universe, they echo in the ears of our lives.

Embraced
Dorothy Bothe

When my cherished vanities and velvets
Along with my tightly held smug view
Have given up their struggle to hold on
When the busyness of striving
The wanting and the grasping
Have had their day
When the firm steps of sure footing,
The clear sound,
The defined shapes and sharp line
Have steadily been stripped away
Then, maybe then, in my forced simplicity
And naked surrender
I will find my real self
With some richness at the core
In the stillness of the morning
Before the daily tasks are underway
In that clearest of moments,
With remorse and a small shiver
I know my days are few
And at the last, the welcoming
Embrace of oneness will be waiting for me there

Dorothy Bothe passed away on September 6th, 2013. This poem was written not long before her death at the age of 100.

On Your Mark
Therese Huntzinger

i didn’t show up to run
it wasn’t to be my day
i was there to cheer
my dad, my friend, my city

i was there for their story
not for mine
i didn’t show up for news
yet front page was I

it was not in my blood
to cross the finish line
yet there it is
and now I have

our marathon finish times
8, 23 and 29
i didn’t show up to run
maybe i should have
Stone Garden
Barbara Stanush

to Georgia O’Keeffe

In my dream I leave home
Catch a Greyhound bus
And travel through desert
To Abiquiu

To join you walking at evening
Looking at rocks
Down at rocks and up
To take a step in fall light
Not talking

I am wary of words
Curled around and pulled tight
They extract the wrong things

Rocks and bones don’t change much
They have clean edges
And skulls are symmetry laid bare

I like what age does
Bones show
If a thing is right it ages well
Something either is or it isn’t
Eventually it tells you itself
Then one can’t impose

Do you paint still
Or are the rocks sufficient now

first published in Stone Garden, Pecan Grove Press

Aimless Love
Billy Collins

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,
I fell in love with a wren
and later in the day with a mouse
the cat had dropped under the dining room table.

In the shadows of an autumn evening,
I fell for a seamstress
still at her machine in the tailor’s window,
and later for a bowl of broth,
steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.

This is the best kind of love, I thought,
without recompense, without gifts,
or unkind words, without suspicion,
or silence on the telephone.

The love of the chestnut,
the jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.

No lust, no slam of the door—
the love of the miniature orange tree,
the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower,
the highway that cuts across Florida.

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor—
just a twinge every now and then
for the wren who had built her nest
on a low branch overhanging the water
and for the dead mouse,
still dressed in its light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up
in a field on its tripod,
ready for the next arrow.

After I carried the mouse by the tail
to a pile of leaves in the woods,
I found myself standing at the bathroom sink
gazing down affectionately at the soap,
so patient and soluble,
so at home in its pale green soap dish.
I could feel myself falling again
as I felt its turning in my wet hands
and caught the scent of lavender and stone.
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.

**Your Name**
*Maria Alonso*

In my dreams, in my mind
Your name was always there.
At times it would even escape my lips.
It would take notice of your absence
Since your presence was usually bright and powerful.
Of course, I took notice then.
Now.
Now and then your name comes to mind
And a smile that reaches my eyes appears
and warms my face and memory of you.

**Glass Walls**
*Janie Alonso*

While wiping the dust off a picture frame
of Van Gogh's *Artist room-Chambre de L'Artiste*
The empty shell of a dead silver fish
Caught my attention.
It was in the lower left corner
I tapped the glass, it didn’t move.
Its last breath taken in between
Glass and paper
trapped so tightly
it couldn’t move forward or backward
the body now a permanent display
Lying in state
fossilized
When do we feel trapped?
Not able to go forward or backward
Just standing still.
No one can hear our screams
echoing inside our
Self-imposed glass walls

**The Long Night**
*Juan Victoriano*

The end of a long Night has finally come.
Through years of doubt,
Truth has finally made its way to my heart.
I look out now upon the world,
and I see my struggle in the eyes of others.
I’d like to lend them my strength,
to pull them out of their sadness
because the world turns a blind eye,
to those who can’t see.

**Outcomes**
*Vivian Kearney*

We have gone far, very far
in our searches over the oceans
of reality using our star-led minds
and our forests of sub-consciousness
way into developing predictable
cities with many right-angled
scientific discoveries about how
the universe really moves and
works but alack and alas
our groves have been cut down
Deer runs are now new suburbs
Is Merlin, the shape-changer,
proud of our alchemy?

**To the Girl I See Wait for the Bus around 7:45 in the Morning**
*Blake Castano*

I don’t know your name,
But I imagine it would be something gorgeous, like Rose or Viola.
If you think about it, the beauty really lies in the object, not the name.
By that logic, your name would sound like the song the wind plays to make the grass and the trees dance.
You’re like a breeze.
If all this sounds familiar, that’s probably because it is.
Me and Shakespeare share some similar views.
I can’t write you a play, but I’d give a kingdom to be your Romeo.
I think I’d like to take you somewhere. Put you on my horse and gallop far from funeral services and lunch specials.
I want to close the gap.
I’m doing the best I can right now, walking a distance
as long as second guessing and as short as nothing to lose
to put this poem on your doorstep.
I’ll bet you’ve never held an apple blossom.
I hope holding this paper makes you smile like you’re holding an apple blossom.
I want to see you smile when you hold an apple blossom.
Now I’ve been hurt before, and I’m not too naive to think that
I’m the only one, so don’t be scared.
I don’t want to take your heart and put it on a shelf like some kind of glorified high school football trophy.
I want to teach it to fly.
#17—the long walk  
_Hector Lopez_

along the frontier the sun beats me
sweat drips from my brow onto my burnt face
sliding down the length of my body
to quench the thirst of the desert ground

dusk descends upon me
as I hear the coyote
cry my name in the night
air that I breathe quietly
to not awaken la migra
that haunts my every thought
but cannot extinguish my imagination
or drain my fortitude

and the noise of my walk is poverty
it drags behind me whispering
the names of those who cannot come
the names of those that have come before me

and with me, I bring my labor
because my pride is in my work
and my work is my life

it is all I have
it is all I can offer
my
new
country

In Praise of Jealousy  
_Milo Kearney_

You bet you rouse my jealousy.
I watch you with a wary guard.
He who would pass will find it hard
to find a way past me.

A treasure not kept in a bank
is likely soon to disappear.
A puppy which is not held near
may be stolen by somebody’s prank.

So yield to the critic’s shove
and swear off jealousy, if you will.
Relax your vigilance to your fill,
but, please, just do not call it love.

A Tale of Two Houses  
_Joyce Collins_

I Feel Sorry for the House

I feel sorry for the house—
for the walls that had to hide,
to hold, to hold inside
for the wallpaper
stuck there, trapped there
with eyes that wouldn’t close,
for the roof that had to keep it together, make it all seem sound,
for the floor on which I hid by my bed, that small space I con-
trolled
It had to know. It had to know.
I feel sorry for the house

The Clothes of My Home

Everything about the house is me—the sounds, the silence
the couch, the kitchen
the lawn or the lack thereof
the light through the blinds
that I raise so the cats can bask in the sun

the TV that is rarely on
the pictures on the wall
the fake plants because I never water real ones and most of all
the poems—
framed and loved
written and read by me
spread throughout the house
as adornments on the clothes of my home

A Linear Life  
_Blake_

Raindrops fall on the rocks
Smiling and whispering to me goodbye as they spill themselves
over the readily-receiving earth.
I can’t help but think how some people’s lives relate to theirs, in
the linear respect. Living just to die.
I imagine that the quick and simple existence of these much-
appreciated martyrs not only makes green sprout form the
soil but also in men’s hearts, envious of the simplicity of their
lives.

Fall. Splat. Nirvana.
But where’s the fun in that? Why should I envy an existence with
no dictation of action nor desire? It’s a privilege, even if the
going gets tough.
We grow old and rain falls. We love and rain falls. We fall often-
times, too, but it’s not quite so graceful, nor quite so welcome
as the rain.
The Carnival
Peter Holland

If it takes some sore soles for this soul to soar, I’ll walk the world.
If it takes some bruised bones for this body to be whole, don’t stop when I say when.
There’s a fine line between bravery and common sense.
You’d think I was walking on a tightrope remembering your favorite things. You’d think I was doing it on one leg thinking that I was one of them.
Lion taming seems so much easier.
I promise, I’m not worth it.
I promise, I appreciate the effort. The Lord knows, probably better than anyone, it’s nice to be wanted.
But as I stare into the maw of your sweet nothings, every nerve in my body shrieks.
And as I turn to run, I’m met with the abyss. No, not AN abyss, THE abyss. You know, the one that stares back? However, I’m not faced with some sort of monster, but the secret green of your eyes, and it’s just as terrifying.
I think there have been more men that have walked on the moon then know about that.
I would tell you how that affects me if I wanted you to fall in love with me again, but I’ve grown past that.
I can’t afford to be irresponsible. I’ve had holes in my pockets ever since I pulled up my roots.
The sides of my mouth have never been so heavy, but I’ve never been so strong.
Finally, I can pick them up on my own.

Khalilah
Khalilah Bilal

Be not afraid of your past ghosts that dwell in living places
Take hold of the Beloved
Pray for salvation in secret places
Keep your heart
Walk slowly and steady
Don’t be afraid of the dark
Remember you’re just a spark
Not a burning flame
Though age and weakness are coming upon you
Don’t give up the will to fight
Wisdom will be your gift for staying
There are people around you
Cheering for your peace
The spirits in heaven ordain your release
Give up fear
Give up resentment
Give up on giving up
Let hip sway into salvation
Quietly, gently
BE

Illusion Solution
Tom E.

Make no mistake, the illusion is real
In that, it is really an allusion
People will use half-truths and foggy facts
To create public confusion

What’s real or not real is not for debate
Or subject to public opinion
Look for and find the salient facts
Before making an important decision

There’ll never be a “one philosophy fits all”
Or any easy solution
So we must decide which is right
And which is the actual illusion.

Good things; Bad Things
Christian Maloles

Good things; bad things
Pleasure—pain; understanding the balance
Tipping the scale
Gold weighs heavier than silver
Dreams over reality, perhaps excess naught bad
The golden plate of the scale
’s about to hit the table!
“One must draw the line somewhere.”
Realize that silver isn’t silver
Lest gold be diamond
Silver is actually lead; thus, heavier than gold.
Ah! The turncoat!
The right lead-filled plate, lined with silver, claiming the prize—
Gold loses, and is lifted back into the air
But don’t leave—the scale—look!
Balance of both sides.
The scale has rocked, and the door is open——
Wherefore then, is the gold of equal mass to silver.

It Returns at Times
Erika Peña

It returns at times you can’t escape.
Your memories frozen in time can’t seem to fade.

Tired fool keeps running.
Slightly damaged needs repair.

The winds hit my face and I feel you next to me.
Filling a void
Thinking of you.
Dream: The dream takes place in an operating room in a hospital. I am lying on an operating table and have come out of surgery. The strange thing is that the doctor has left me open and has not sewn me back up. All my internal organs in the stomach and chest area are exposed; moreover, they are all functioning perfectly. My heart is pumping, etc. I am okay being exposed in this environment, but what if I were to be exposed outside of here? What if I walked around like this? I would be very vulnerable. I am thinking it is not a good idea to be totally exposed like this. A doctor (unknown) in a white coat comes in and looks at me. He says, “Everything is functioning perfectly; the surgery was a success.” I look up at him and smile. I say, “Yes, I feel great, but are you not going to sew me back up?” He says, “I need to leave you like this for a while, and then we will discuss the next procedure.” I wonder how long I will be exposed like this. End of dream.

Comment: The unconscious is showing me how valuable the persona is; the persona protects our inner being. Without the persona, our soul would be completely naked. The doctor represents the healer, teacher, guide, and he knows about these things. There is a feeling of how vital the persona is for our survival in the conscious world. The dream reflects what typically happens in analysis. In analysis, we learn about different kinds of personas that help our consciousness relate to the outer world. The open organs reflect the inner world—the world that is connected to the unconscious. In analysis, we also learn how to communicate with and understand the unconscious. Trying to go into the unconscious alone leaves us vulnerable. This dream highlights the struggle between the inner life and the persona—the adaptation to the outer life. Is it not synchronicity how something as seemingly insignificant as a puff of wind can turn our outer world around?

Mother Earth Speaks
James Brandenburg

He climbed up
from red clay
as I birthed him
an infant reaching
toward the sky.

In my arms I anchored him
wrapped him in blankets
of love.
He grew up
connected but eventually

Beach Time
Lou Taylor

Generations
Gather for fun
Salt air, sand, ocean and sun

As waves wash tired bodies and souls
Blessings from the deep
Come ashore

Tides of time coalesce
Waves roll in
And out again
Art Therapy

I Want to Cry
Tracy Brown

I want to cry, to let the tears fall
hot and streaming down my face
to feel the swell of impending tears
and the release of energy
be it grief, joy or pain.
I want to drip salty tears onto my pillow
on to my sleeve, onto the dry parched world
enough to fill voids and cups of victory
equal to wash away disbelief
or to water seeds of hope that need to grow.
Cry with me, won’t you celebrate life given,
Mourn life lived no more,
cry with me sometime, to aggregate the relief
of our souls’ burdens or nourish while forests
are threatened, waiting on the reward of death:
to be made over.
I want to cry cleansing tears, healing torrents
laughing and moaning
jumping on the tips of my toes
or bending low, submitting to change
until the well in my heart is empty
and the cool rains from heaven come
renewing us again.

A Friend
Frances Ford

So many words, things, situations come
to my mind when I think of this word.
Kind, dependable, trustworthy, confidante.
A friend doesn’t always have to be human.
Plenty of times a pet can fit the description,
make me happy and giggle when I’m not in the mood.
Sometimes a brother, mother, sister, cousin can
also be a friend. There in times of need
when you just can’t seem to muster
equal courage to go on.
Hmm… a friend.

A friend in human form should be one
I can tell my hopes, screams and dreams to
and will know what to do or say when I can’t find words.
A friend in human form will listen, hold,
cherish and even hug forever more.
A friend won’t turn her back on you,
won’t insult or ridicule you.
A friend in human form won’t ever
leave you hanging. A friend will forgive
you for your flaws or faults and fix things
when distance between you is formed.
Hmm… a friend.

A friend in human form is truly rare these days.
If I can be all these things and more,
why is it so hard for me to find a
true friend in human form?

Hendecasyllables
Algernon Charles Swinburne

In the month of the long decline of roses
I, beholding the summer dead before me,
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters
Moving tremulous under feet of angels
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine;
Heard between them a voice of exultation,
“Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,
All the fruits of the day from all her branches
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,
All are taken away; the season wasted,
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets
When low light was upon the windy reaches
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever.”
**Select Poems**

**In Praise of the Second Amendment**

_Fernando Flores_

Who ignores the requiem
For Sandy Hook Columbine & Colorado
Who can hold a wounded life
Between his arms & be unmoved

Children cut off before their prime
—such a small catastrophe—
The rest keep ragging at iniquity
Before a blind bewildered justice

How to curb the violence
Retort the zealots is to take up arms
The elect promote so little reason
Politics offers so much less

Where to find the fix
In such an expeditious age
Where data travels at the click
Of the electronic page

Can it mean anything
To anyone else that
Poets point out
What others often miss

If offering poems
Could stem the bleeding
But the killing does not stop
& not a single soul seems safe

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**Winter’s Home**

_Kyle Anderson_

Every night, I pass where she’s staying,
And try to look inside. All I glimpse is her breath,
Collected on the window like opaque fire, guarded
By the dancing glow of a lone candle on the sill.

Sometimes I dream of writing her,
Sneaking my finger to the frosted glass,
And tracing these words, like a whisper—

I’m still hunting
For a good tree
To hibernate in

Maybe she’ll send her hounds to track me down,
Wolves of pure bone with icicle fangs.
They’ll tear me apart and scatter my ribs
All across the tundra of this world.

Or maybe she’ll just disappear, her body thawing,
And my footprints leaving her window will transform
Into a trail of shallow pools, teeming with melted stars.

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**Beachhead**

_John Grey_

There’s boys, maybe ten, eleven of them,
racing across the sand toward the water.
Nothing can stop them.
The land is not enough.
Not even the ice-cream cart can hold them back,
and, at their age, certainly not the bronzing lovelies
splayed hip to hip on colored towels.

Forget the houses, forget the streets, forget the stores…
they all have a stop,
a wavering line of foam,
where solid footing gives way
and kick and crawl, splash and tumble,
take over.

“Don’t go out too far!” their parents scream.
But just as the earth finds voice,
the water’s up to its neck in children.

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**All Hallow’s Eve**

_Linda M. Fischer_

Darkness closes over the afternoon like a hood.
We have set the clocks back and already feel
the skeletal fingers of winter at our throats.
In an hour or so the youngest initiates will step
into the night with trepidation, miming spirits
about which they know little—a netherworld
of ghosts and goblins rooted in pagan
belief transmuted into the grin or grimace
of a toothy pumpkin. I light mine against
the onslaught of costumed revelers eager
to cadge their treats before the hallowed eve
is snuffed out with the candles. Parents
loiter in the shadows like a coven of witches
while their children ring my doorbell and offer
the customary choices: proffered tricks
as hollow a threat as my withholding candy
(the potential for mischief long suppressed)
and every treat safely packaged
for a generous helping of unadulterated fun!

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**Sister’s Friend**

_Jay Bell_

I come out this way when my mind is blank and
I need a cigarette

Outside
The hallway is empty, as always
But what?
Ah, one of sister’s friends has bubbled up
As she draws closer
The world explodes in a red hibiscus blossom
**From Chautauqua Institution’s Writing Workshops**

**Poetry Master Class with Billy Collins**

Chautauqua Institution, 15 August 2013

by Lou and Sally Ventura

“A key element in poetry is the interplay between the familiar and the unexpected,” poet Billy Collins explained in Chautauqua, where he spoke on 14 August to a packed Alumni Hall ballroom.

Collins, U.S. Poet Laureate from 2001 to 2003 and New York State Poet Laureate from 2004 to 2006, is the author of several books of poetry and editor of Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry (Random House, 2003) and its sequel, 180 More: Extraordinary Poems for Every Day (Random House, 2005). He is also the recipient of multiple esteemed awards, including the Mark Twain Prize for Humor in Poetry, and of fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Once poetry moved away from form, Collins added, the reader lost the sense of familiarity that well-worn rhyme schemes and consistent meter could deliver. This loss of familiarity undermined the trust the poet once built by working skillfully within predictable forms, forms which promised some surprise along the way. How can poets reestablish trust without the familiarity of form?

People take pleasure in having a sense of what’s coming but not knowing exactly how it will be delivered. Collins’s suggestions are simple. For example, try starting poems with a straightforward, unassailable statement, something undeniably true that readers can accept, the familiar, if you will. Then, as the poem continues, take the reader someplace else, someplace less familiar, someplace with a surprise.

Collins compares this technique to an eye chart, starting with the obvious and ending with something else entirely. Another suggestion involves the simple act of creating stanzas, because, according to Collins, the reader’s poetic pleasures result from signs of human intelligence and design. Without the use of strict poetic form, something as elementary as stanzas can be one of those signs of human design.

“You need to be humble in the face of your own poetry,” Collins asserts. But how do you achieve humility in the face of your own poetry? Collins suggests trying to communicate a “necessary white lie”: that you are more interested in the poetry than in yourself. This can be accomplished by diminishing the importance of your own emotions and focusing on creating an emotional response on the part of the reader. Finally, keeping the reader in mind, the poet needs to present words and lines that sound like they enjoy being around each other.

Chautauqua Institution is a community on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in New York that comes alive each summer with a unique mix of fine and performing arts, lectures, interfaith worship and programs, and recreational activities. Over the course of nine weeks, more than 100,000 visitors will stay at Chautauqua and participate in programs, classes, and community events for all ages—all within the beautiful setting of a historic lakeside village.

**Crossing the Nonfiction Line: Autobiographical Fiction and Fictionalized Memoir**

*Nancy McCabe*

Last May, I attended a talk by Tim O’Brien when he visited Spalding University. O’Brien is the author of the story collection *The Things They Carried*, which has often been described as a book that straddles genres, borrowing from both fiction and creative nonfiction. During his talk, O’Brien told a moving story about what happened when he received his draft notice in 1968, driving to the Rainy River in Minnesota with the intention of escaping to Canada. In the end, he didn’t do it.

The audience was mesmerized. It wasn’t till the next day, when faculty and students in our program met with O’Brien for an informal discussion, that he told us that the story of his trip to the Rainy River had never happened. Yes, when drafted in 1968, he’d thought about fleeing, but he didn’t. He stayed home and mowed his lawn. It was fiction. I was sitting among a group of creative nonfiction students, and they visibly recoiled, throwing their hands in the air and shielding their faces. But O’Brien went on to explain that the point of a piece of fiction is not to deliver true facts exactly as they happened but rather to use facts and details in order to give an accurate account of the feelings behind a given situation. Though the events in the story are not true, the story itself conveys an emotional truth.

The response of the students was telling. The creative nonfiction students felt deceived because O’Brien had, in his stories throughout his collection, used his own name for his protagonist. The fiction students didn’t really care. Our expectations for storytelling had informed how we’d heard O’Brien’s story and now responded to this new information.

The line between fiction and nonfiction can be a fine one, and has, more and more in recent years, created controversy and confusion among both readers and writers. What distinguishes the genres, in particular autobiographical fiction from memoir, that contains speculative or imagined elements? I started out as a fiction writer, and for many years I resisted writing memoir. And then it turned out that what I was trying to write at the time just worked better when I switched genres. So why is that? Are the two genres really any different from each other?

Often when I’m reading, I play the game of “Why is this fiction and not memoir?” or “Why is this memoir and not fiction?” Why is Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* a novel? Why is *Angela’s Ashes* a memoir? Why did Mary Karr, Lauren Slater, and Jeannette Walls choose to call *The Liar’s Club, Lying*, and *The Glass Castle* memoir, especially when, in the case of the first two, their titles cleverly excuse any invention that may occur in these books? I found myself wondering, reading Tobias Wolff, why *This Boy’s Life* is a memoir but *Old School*, which seems to take up where the memoir left off, is fiction. Then, *In Pharaoh’s Army*, a memoir, begins where *Old School* ends. So why was one a novel while the other two
were memoirs?
At one time, memoir wasn’t as popular an option as the novel. That was the case when Sylvia Plath published The Bell Jar in the early 1960s. And maybe, even with today's options, she would have chosen fiction; many writers have been known to do so because they want the disguises that it affords. The fiction label offers some automatic defenses, allowing writers to simply claim that they made everything up. If James Frey had simply called A Million Little Pieces a novel, he would have saved himself a lot of grief, but his book might not have sold as well, either. After all, a glance at New York Times bestseller lists will show that the memoirs that sell well are often the ones about extreme if not sensational experience, severe mental illness, addiction, poverty. Perhaps because of this, memoirists sometimes get stereotyped as self-absorbed navel-gazers. But writing good memoir takes intense curiosity, courage, and generosity—the willingness to strip away disguises if that’s what it takes to reach insight and create connections. Ultimately, form and genre choices are shaped by our sense of how truth can best be revealed: through taking real life and changing, embellishing, and dramatizing it, or through focusing on capturing the inherent drama of true stories.

Years ago when I was a student, Tobias Woolf told one of my graduate workshops that though he’d initially planned to write This Boy’s Life as a novel, it quickly became a memoir because, he said he’d realized, the truth was already dramatic enough. He said, “I write fiction when I need to dramatize the truth.”

His words stuck with me during the many years I was mostly writing fiction, in many cases using highly autobiographical material. I wrote a story about a twenty-year-old who honeymoons in the Lily Tomlin Shrine Room of Rosalea’s Hotel in downtown Harper, KS, and questions her ill-conceived marriage and her whole existence. I wrote another story about a woman’s terrifying experience of being wakened by an intruder shining a flashlight in her eyes. I wrote another story about a burnt-out crisis counselor who has what feels like a psychic experience. None of these stories felt like they were working. Then I remembered Woolf’s words and decided my stories were not only more interesting, they just made more sense when I admitted that I was the 20-year-old in the Lily Tomlin Shrine room, a place that became even more bizarre and surreal, and less a seemingly strangely-placed symbolic element, when it was clear that it wasn’t a creation of my imagination, but something that had really existed. I was the woman who encountered the Flashlight Man, and I was the exhausted domestic abuse counselor who woke in the night at the moment a neighbor’s husband set her bed on fire. It turned out that fiction was actually pulling me away from the stories I needed to tell. Casting them as fiction was like observing them through gauze. Stripping that away, and addressing what had really happened, and why, restored the drama that fiction had drained away.

Tobias Woolf talks about the distinctions between genres in a Missouri Review interview: “When I call something a memoir, it’s my understanding with the reader that they can accept this story as a chronic of actual events as I remember them.” When writing fiction, he says, “I might use colors from the same palette and use experiences from my memory and my own life, but I take off. I’m not loyal to the facts or to my memory. I’m really inventing. I’m after a different kind of truth … when I write fiction … a memoir and a novel are very different … they are fundamentally, organically different.” Woolf admits that some of the events in his novel Old School really happened. But, he says, “if you consider the events in this book against a historical standard, it’s very much a novel.”

Ultimately, of course, there is a lot of overlap between genres—especially when fiction writers borrow from memoir strategies for their first person narrators. Some fiction sounds a lot like memoir; some memoir sounds a lot like fiction. So while there are no absolutes, it can be helpful to consider reader expectations and the effect we want our work to have as we make choices about the best way to present our material.

In the middle of a bustling international crowd under the glass pyramid of the Louvre, Betsy’s eighty-seven year old mother, Erma, took one loose step and leaned against her. “I have to sit down,” the elder gasped. A fifty-nine year old Betsy put her arm around her and led her through the horde: groups of children with bright colored caps, young parents pushing strollers, teenagers with notebooks, couples adoring each other, large chatty families. She found a vacant bench and sat while Erma lay across it, placing her head in her daughter’s lap, shutting her eyes. The self-conscious daughter looked around, jealously watching the cheerful throng. She tried on an expression of casual boredom while her mother seemingly dozed in public. Betsy noticed two security guards that stood close by, their hands on their hips as they spoke in French to a young man with unkempt hair. Should they alert them to her mother’s condition? She tapped a foot, uncertain what to do. No one paid any attention to them.

She could have guessed this would happen; it was their second somewhat rigorous day in Paris. In the hotel room the night before, Erma had apologized for not doing any kind of exercise to prepare for the vacation. “I didn’t think there would be so much walking,” she said, and Betsy thought, Duh! Did she think I was going to push her around Paris in a wheelchair?

“We’ll just take it nice and slow and you can stop and rest anytime,” Betsy said while her mother once again took her blood pressure, noted it on a chart, and then lay back on her heating pad.

“I’m not happy with that diastolic. I’ll take it again after I’ve rested a bit,” Erma said. Why on earth would someone come half way around the globe if they were that concerned about their hour by hour blood pressure? Betsy thought. Was Erma expecting her to end her vacation and search out a French cardiologist upon a questionable reading? She went into the bathroom and clenched her teeth. When she came out her mother was snoozing, propped up on a pillow she had brought from home, her mouth open, a book beneath her chin. For a tense moment Betsy thought her mother looked a little too still—until she emitted a raucous snore. She hated waking her but would never be able to sleep with that noise.
Erma slept with a CPAP machine that was prescribed for sleep apnea and thankfully also kept her from snoring. The device with its straps and hoses made her look like an alien on life support, Betsy thought, but made a nice rhythmic shooze as it forced humidified air into her nose. Erma had been perplexed about the electrical requirements for the device. There had been several emails between Betsy and her mother before the daughter could convince her the CPAP would work in the old boutique hotel. With the mask in place, Erma curled up on her side and fell to sleep. Betsy watched her mother and thought her body’s roundness and her smooth cheeks around the mask made her look like a small child—as if the device were mysteriously renewing her. It made Betsy remember a childhood parable her mother had read to her: an old man who sought out a magic rejuvenating mist to stave off aging. She wondered if her mother’s desire to make this trip to Paris with its inconveniences was a way of proclaiming her continued relevance and vitality, to defy the march toward frailty and death. But it was Betsy who had to bear the full burden of keeping her comfortable, of lugging her oversized suitcase, of watching for every curb and step as they walked, of just watching her, making sure she was all right at every moment.

The weather was windy and rainy and a brisk 45 degrees Fahrenheit the morning they were to visit the Louvre. Betsy excitedly stared out the window from their fourth-floor room at the narrow street, watching Parisians bustle about in fashionable raincoats and boots; a man battled an inside-out umbrella as he trotted down the sidewalk. She moved away from the window and noticed her mother staring at light summer slacks and a pink gossamer blouse laid out on the bed. “I know you emailed me with the forecast, but I just couldn’t imagine it being so wet and so cold in April. And I have such nice sweaters and a raincoat at home.”

“You can wear a sweater of mine and my raincoat, okay? And we have an umbrella, we’ll be all right. Now when we step outside, tell me if you’re too cold. You can wear both my sweaters or we can buy you something warm to wear,” Betsy said thinking, Shit! Was she supposed to pack for her mother? But the daughter didn’t scold her, of course. She would never scold her. But she thought her mother could take better care of herself. Erma had her own small apartment in a retirement complex, and she still drove. But Betsy ashamedly wasn’t a part of her mother’s daily life, so she wasn’t in touch with Erma’s day-to-day acuity or mobility; she only visited once, maybe twice a year. Betsy had lived in California for the last forty years, since she was nineteen, while her mom remained in Texas, living near Betsy’s older brother who was a nurse, now retired.

“So you think she can do this trip?” Betsy called and asked him right before she purchased the plane tickets.

“Course … she’ll be just fine,” he said—finally—after he recounted a profusion of stories doled out in impossibly slow Texas fashion, most of which Betsy had already heard. He kept asking why she didn’t call more often, so nice to talk for a while. She rubbed a painful ear once they hung up. But she believed him, about their mom. He’s the better sibling, she thought. The one who stayed. Ever since her father’s death he had become the one trusted to watch out for Erma.

Before heading to the Louvre, the two went in search of a quaint café for breakfast, and there were plenty nearby. With Erma’s arm through Betsy’s, they walked down a sidewalk made narrow by café tables. Betsy stopped and read a menu board while Erma was distracted by a baby in a stroller. “What a beautiful baby,” Erma said to the parents who sat at a table. “I just love babies.” She leaned into the stroller, a few inches from its face and Betsy stiffened. Please oh please don’t touch the baby, she thought. But the French parents were quite gracious and relaxed; they smiled at Erma and thanked her in English. Betsy tugged at her mother, and they continued their search for a restaurant. After a couple of turns on short blocks Erma asked, “Are you sure you know where we are?”

“Yes. We can’t get lost, I have a map,” Betsy said.

“You’re like your father. He was always the navigator when the two of us vacationed—just led me around. I didn’t mind, but I never knew where we were.” Maybe this was why Betsy had agreed to do this—to take an elderly woman to Paris. She had become her father. She was tall as he had been, towering over her mother, conveniently protective.

“Look at that building there with the big crowd. What is that?” Erma said to Betsy on the city bus while traveling to the Louvre.

“That’s the Hôtel de Ville, Paris City Hall. We saw it yesterday.”

“Now I recognize it.” Erma sat next to a placard—a figure with a cane. A young man had relinquished the seat for her as soon as they boarded. Betsy stood next to her, her arm looped around a pole. Her body rocked while the crowded bus lurched forward.

The daughter looked out at the Seine with a backdrop of Notre Dame. A tour boat slowly cruised the river, the passengers wrapped up tight against the rain on the open deck. She saw the reflection of her mother’s excited face in the window looking at the same stunning view. Betsy smiled and her mother turned, smiling up to her. It struck the daughter how incredibly sweet her mother seemed in old age. No, not seemed, was: she was so enchantingly sweet. Shame settled inside her for her frequent impatient thoughts. As if reading her mind, her mother said, “I’m sorry I’ve gotten so old, my darling. But I still love to see new things, and to finally see Paris. You did this for me.” Betsy reached a finger to her mother’s cheek and wiped a drop, from a tear or the rain she didn’t know which. Her mother grabbed her hand and kissed it.

But in the next instant Betsy was again overwhelmed with her responsibility as she helped her mother off the bus onto a crowded street and into the grand museum. After only five minutes of rest on the bench her mother sat up. “Should we get something to eat?” she asked.

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“You feeling okay?” Betsy asked, amazed at her mother’s quick recovery.

“Yes, I just needed a little rest. I’m sorry.”

“That’s alright. We’re in no rush. We certainly don’t need to see everything. Quality viewing not quantity—that’s the way to see the Louvre. Right? There’s a gorgeous café just up the escalator. Want to go check it out?”

“That sounds perfect.”
They told him drowning was peaceful. He told them he doubted it. Uncle Geoffrey pointed out that it was preferable to the awfulness of poison. Aunt Alison supported her husband’s opinion on poison. She went on to speak eloquently on the nastiness of throwing oneself in front of a truck and being scraped off the tyres in little pieces.

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

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

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

Nelson Cranborne was an idealistic young poet. He had fallen in love with Crintilia’s icy blonde beauty. She, having checked his financial credentials and finding that he was in even higher league than her family, permitted him to kiss the lobe of her left ear. It was a match made in Switzerland, where they got married, a league than her family, permitted him to kiss the lobe of her left ear. It was a match made in Switzerland, where they got married, and all that remained to be done was the deed itself. The location for the drowning was confirmed, and all that was left was to make him drink as much of it as you can, and then….”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Good man!” enthused Uncle Geoffrey.

“My hero!” purred Laetitia, pressing her ample breasts against him.
“No need for that with your sister scarcely cold!” admonished Aunt Alison.

Alone on the designated beach, Nelson found himself the victim of conflicting emotions. He had sobered up enough to realise that he had been totally outwitted by his in-laws and, through a mixture of stupidity, drunkenness, and spinelessness, had himself become an outlaw. He had never felt so miserable, and yet he had never felt such a keen appetite for life. It seemed therefore the perfect moment to end it. He walked into the sea, noting how the flirtatious ocean lapped against his body. He decided to swim before letting himself drown. The thought struck him: when it came to it, could he, would he let himself drown? He was debating this when he heard a cry. A woman’s cry. Coming from the sea. The afternoon sun lapped against his body. He decided to swim before letting him end it. He walked into the sea, noting how the flirtatious ocean

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

Rosey broke the restful silence. “Well, are you going to do it?” Nelson sighed. “I suppose I should,” he said. “After all, I told them I would, and I suppose one bit of sea is as good to end one’s life in as another.”

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

After a short interval Nelson rejoined Rosey on dry land. “There!” he said; “I’ve done it. Honour is satisfied. I’m a dead man. We have money, and those vultures back in Ireland have money. There’s no extradition treaty between the two countries, so everybody’s happy.”

“What a difference a day makes,” said Rosey. “Twenty four little hours….”

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

“Writing again, Nelson?” The voice made him jump.

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

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

“I’m entering it for a competition. That way somebody is bound to read it.”

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

“Oh, is that right?” said Gobby. “I thought ’twas my charm and wit that kept you sane.”

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

“That an’ the visits from the redhead,” said Gobby archly, picking up the pocket encyclopaedia that lay open next to Nelson’s copybook.

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

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

“Fact is stranger than fiction,” said Nelson.

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

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

**Plane Conversation**

*Maxine Cohen*

As soon as the woman sat down next to her on the plane, Martha knew she wanted to talk. From time to time she could feel the woman’s eyes darting at her, but Martha ignored her. Flying was stressful enough without having to keep up a conversation with an absolute stranger. From experience, Martha knew hours of meaningless chit-chat would only make the trip in the straight jacket space of the plane more miserable. At best, Martha preferred people at arm’s length … even friends.

Opening the book she had purchased especially for the trip, she quickly became engrossed in the plot, shutting out the drone of the airplane engine and the voice of the flight attendant who moved through the aisle offering refreshments. She was about thirty pages into the story when she unsnapped her seat belt and reached beneath the seat in front of her to get a tissue from her purse. Sensing the opportunity she had been waiting for, the woman in the next seat quickly asked, “May I help you?”

Martha shook her head, declining the offer firmly. She turned back to her book, but the floodgates had opened.

“Do you fly often?” the woman asked.

**Voices de la Luna, 15 October 2013**
“Not really,” Martha mumbled. “Neither do I.” The woman continued, oblivious to Martha’s begrudged response. “I wouldn’t fly at all if I didn’t have to. It just scares me to death to be off the ground. It’s not natural.”

Martha kept her eyes on the book as the woman chattered on. “When I was young, I could never even go on a roller coaster … scared of heights. I feel a lot safer in a car, but I didn’t have any choice this time. Driving takes too long and I can’t take much time off work … especially since this isn’t my regular vacation.”

Her words came tumbling out like leaves falling from a tree in a rainstorm. Martha thought that talking probably calmed the woman’s nerves, but she didn’t want to encourage her.

“My name is Elizabeth Baker,” the woman said. “I’m on my way to my son’s wedding in Denver. Where are you off to?”

“California,” Martha muttered, barely concealing the impatience in her voice.

“Oh … I’ve never been to California,” the woman said wistfully. “I hear it’s beautiful, and the weather is supposed to be perfect. Are you going to visit family?”

“Friends,” Martha answered, wondering what might happen if she refused to answer at all.

“That’s nice. Sometimes it’s easier to visit with friends than family.” The woman paused for a moment.

“My son … his name is George … is only twenty-three. That’s pretty young to get married! Of course, I was younger than that when he was born, but things are different now. It seems that if people get married at all, they get married late.” She paused. “I don’t know what the hurry’s all about, but I guess it will be okay. George finished college and he has a good job.”

There was a tinge of sadness in her voice when she continued. “I’ve never met the bride. I wanted George to bring her home to meet me but he just never found the time to do it. He says she’s real nice and from a good family.” She hesitated a little. “From what he told me, I think he’s marrying up.”

Martha wasn’t sure but guessed that “marrying up” meant the bride’s family was well-to-do. She felt a small tug of curiosity and for the first time turned her head to look at the woman. Her appearance was startling.

Elizabeth’s dark, wavy hair slightly streaked with wisps of gray was pulled back in a tight bun revealing a pale, almost perfect face—worn a little like a piece of sculpture that had been left out to weather too many storms, but nothing could disguise its fine, even features and delicate bones. Not a trace of makeup was visible, not even lipstick. She wore her beauty like an old garment that had been left out to weather too many storms, but nothing could disguise its fine, even features and delicate bones. Not a trace of makeup was visible, not even lipstick. She wore her beauty like an old garment.

Martha quickly estimated her age as mid-forties. She stared at her for a few moments, trying to imagine what she must have looked like when she was twenty.

The woman’s hands fluttered as she spoke. “It’s going to be a big, fancy wedding … catered with dancing and everything. To tell the truth, I’m a little uncomfortable about it. I’m not sure I’ll fit in. I don’t have the kind of clothes everyone else will be wearing.”

“I’m sure you’ll look lovely,” Martha said, believing it. “Well, I doubt that,” Elizabeth answered with weary resignation. “It took me weeks to find a pretty dress. It’s powder blue with three-quarter length sleeves … looks like silk, but of course it’s not.”

Martha’s heart sank. Powder blue was her least favorite color, though why she cared was beyond her.

“You see, my husband … well … we’re divorced. After twenty-five years, he just walked out, found another woman he liked better. He married her a few months ago right after the divorce was final. Didn’t even wait a week.”

Martha, who was well acquainted with the pain of an ugly divorce, couldn’t think of anything to say. The woman didn’t notice. “My husband and his new wife,” she said, “they’re going to be at the wedding. It’s bound to be real uncomfortable for me, and I don’t want to look like some cast off.”

The woman’s vulnerability struck Martha with unexpected force. She was suddenly indignant with the wayward husband and his new wife. And what about the son? Why didn’t he bring his fiancée home to meet his mother? Unfeeling bastards, she thought.

Turning her head to look at the woman again, she said, “I’m sure it’s not going to be easy for you, but you’re going to be just fine. You mustn’t worry about your appearance. Most women would give up a couple years of their lives to look as good as you do. I know I would.”

The woman’s eyes widened in surprise. It struck Martha that Elizabeth didn’t know she was beautiful. How could that be? Was it possible to grow so accustomed to the face in the mirror you don’t really see it? Or maybe she was so beaten down that she never glanced at the mirror at all.

“Well, thank you.” Elizabeth said, doubtfully. “I appreciate your trying to boost my confidence. I guess I need that.”

“I’m just telling you the truth,” Martha answered. “Are any other members of your family attending the wedding?”

“No. George is my only child. I have a sister, but she isn’t able to travel. If she was with me it might be a little easier.”

“Yes, it would.” Martha said, imagining Elizabeth alone at the wedding, exiled to a corner table, watching her former husband and his new bride on the dance floor. Martha winced.

She remembered her own son’s wedding and the rage and humiliation she felt when her former husband appeared with his newly-minted wife. The little hugs and sympathetic glances of her friends and family made things worse.

Keeping a smile on her face that evening required strength she hadn’t known she had.

“I’ve been in a similar situation,” Martha reluctantly admitted. She wasn’t accustomed to sharing confidences with anyone. Even her closest friends weren’t allowed into the private room that held her innermost thoughts and feelings. She was surprised by her own candor and even more surprised by the unexpected urge to help Elizabeth. “It wasn’t easy, but I got through it, and you will too.”
“How did you handle it?” Elizabeth asked, hoping for advice that Martha knew she couldn’t supply.

After a long silence, Martha answered. “I pretended I was having a good time, not the life of the party, just smiling and friendly. Sometimes if you pretend hard enough, you can almost fool everyone … except maybe yourself.”

“I’m not sure I could ever do anything like that. I’m not much of an actress,” Elizabeth was hesitant.

“Maybe not, but you have a great smile and it will work wonders. Besides,” Martha said, “think of your son. It’s going to be his special day and there will be plenty of guests at the wedding who will want to meet the mother of the groom. You won’t be alone.” She hoped what she was saying was true.

Martha glanced at Elizabeth again and closed her book. What Elizabeth needed most was distraction, something that could take her mind off the wedding, her rotten husband, and neglectful son at least for a while. There weren’t many choices.

“What kind of work do you do, Elizabeth?” Martha asked.

“I am the head cashier at a super market,” she answered. “Been working there for six years. Most everyone’s nice and I like it. What about you?”

“I’m an accountant … taxes and that sort of thing.”

They continued the conversation; two middle-aged women with almost nothing in common outside their broken marriages chatted and even occasionally smiled until the plane landed in Denver forty minutes later.

In the crowded airport they stopped to say goodbye. Elizabeth gently touched Martha’s arm. “You’ve been really helpful … made the flight real comfortable for me. I want to thank you,” she said.

“No need to thank me at all,” Martha answered brusquely. “Then wanting to reassure her, she said, “Good luck, Elizabeth. You’re going to do just fine.”

“I hope so.” Elizabeth nodded and squeezed Martha’s arm again. She began to walk away but stopped after taking a few steps. “I don’t even know your name,” she said.

“Martha … Martha Miller”

“Martha … well … goodbye, and thanks again.”

Martha waved and started on her way to the baggage claim. Martha watched her as she made her way down the concourse. Then feeling better than she had for a long time, she headed towards the gate to make her connecting flight.
Chapter Eighteen
The Convulsive Developments in Iran Shook the World

The convulsive developments in Iran shook the world. The ten days following Ayatollah Khomeini’s return produced a tectonic shift of power in Tehran, shook Iran and the world, and changed the course of history in the Middle East.

Daily calls from Cyrus’s Persian friends in California, New York and Houston, and from his family in Iran, brought more details about the course of the revolution, but there was not a whisper about the fate of Bahram, Shirin or Reza. Two weeks after Ayatollah Khomeini’s return, Bahram’s friend came to Cyrus’s office with a large envelope, filled with recent newspapers and letters from Iran, which illuminated the last ten days of the Pahlavi monarchy. Cyrus read the material with eagerness and was overjoyed to learn that the Ayatollah had arrived.

Since Ayatollah Khomeini’s return, Iran had two governments: one was the Shah’s appointed prime minister; the other the Islamic Revolutionary Council appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Before his departure the Shah had appointed Shahpoor Bakhtiar as his last prime minister. The man was a political veteran who had played a minor role in the 1950s during Dr. Mosadegh’s campaign against the Shah’s autocratic government. The Shah was hoping Bakhtiar might bring peace to the country and save his throne. However, like Jonah, Bakhtiar was swallowed by the revolutionary monster, and his government succumbed to the storm. The real power was in the hands of a university professor, a moderate Islamist who had been appointed by the Islamic Revolutionary Council under Ayatollah Khomeini’s strict control.

The Shah’s Prime Minister declared martial law and forbade all political gatherings. The chief of the armed forces imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew from 5:30 PM to 5:00 AM. All military garrisons were put in a state of high alert. Meanwhile, the Islamic Revolutionary Council responded by urging soldiers, police and other security personnel to defy their commanders and join the revolution. They also encouraged people to disregard the curfew and continue with the daily marches.

On the first day of the curfew, air force cadets at a garrison near Tehran wanted to see the newsreel of Ayatollah Khomeini’s arrival in Tehran. Reza and a group of other students, including Shirin, were assigned by the Ayatollah’s Arrival Committee to deliver the film. The next day the students showed the film in the conference hall of the Air Force Academy in the far eastern part of Tehran. The students were overwhelmed by the cadets’ response. Their shouts of revolutionary slogans during the film and afterwards filled the air and whipped up a frenzy. In direct violation of their commanders’ orders, the cadets formed a parade and soon followed the Ayatollah Arrival Committee’s lead to begin their historic march toward the city and towards Ayatollah Khomeini’s temporary residence.

The news of the mutiny of the air force cadets spread through the city like lightning. The chief of the air force demanded that the elite Royal Guards stop the rebellious cadets outside the city. The Guards deployed on the main road into town and halted the cadets’ progress temporarily, until they broke into the the academy and raided its arms depots. Now armed, they overwhelmed the Royal Guards who retreated, leaving behind many casualties. News of the defeat of the Royal Guards spread like wildfire to other garrisons around Tehran. Thousands of members of the Fadayan and Mojaheddin groups joined the cadets and took up arms. The buoyant, diehard, and now armed marchers captured polices stations one after another and attacked another military base. Now soldiers were dropping their rifles and retreating. The next military base was captured and additional piles of arms were distributed to the street marchers.

In the early morning hours armed people roamed the eastern and northern sections of Tehran and marched towards the center of the city. The news of the armed rebellion and the fall of the Royal Guard garrison, of numerous polices stations, and of the army base took the Shah’s caretaker government by surprise and disheartened the military establishment. Meanwhile, the revolution moved forward. More police stations along the path of the marchers were captured, often after only limited skirmishes.

Reza, Shirin and a few of their comrades were leading a group of marchers. Shirin suggested to the comrades that now was an ideal time to attack and capture Evin Prison, free Bahram, and all political prisoners. Reza agreed immediately; if French revolutionaries could destroy the Bastille, why not do likewise and attack Evin Prison? He announced the plan over the loud speaker, and the crowd reacted with shouts of support. Appropriating military vehicles, city buses, and private cars, the phalanx diverted from the main crowd, took up arms and moved north toward Evin Prison.

The procession regrouped in Vanak Square and slowly advanced towards the prison, still more than a mile away. That fateful morning in Iranian history, on the plaza in front of Evin Prison, Reza, Shirin and their followers knew they had reached the zenith of their political life. Sheltered behind a military truck, Reza shouted toward the guards at the main prison gate to drop their guns, surrender now or they would be killed without mercy.

There was no response. He signaled a group of armed revolutionaries to fire their guns in the air. After the volley he yelled again, “Drop your guns now or we will kill you all.”

The shouts of marchers and the firing of guns terrorized the panic-prone prisoners. Some dropped their guns and ran away as fast as they could, and others fearfully opened the gate and ran out. Immediately a throng of marchers shouting “zendeh baad Iran” rushed toward the gate from all directions and stormed the complex.

Reza motioned for the group to follow him and move against the first concrete building, where the students were imprisoned, an area he recognized well. Their team spread out and aimed their rifles at surprised guards outside the entrance.

The sight of the huge crowd of armed civilians confused the guards, who were frozen on the spot. Reza was about to warn them again when rifle shots from several marchers broke the standoff. Two guards were hit and collapsed on the concrete steps. The others immediately dropped their weapons and raised their hands in surrender. The marchers encountered no further resistance as they pushed forward and entered the corridor. Their machine guns blasted the lock of the door to the second concrete building, and then the third and fourth. Within a short time, Evin Prison appeared devoid of guards, although most of the cells were still locked.

Reza, Shirin and their friends broke through the command office and disarmed the few remaining frightened guards who were hiding in the central administration offices and forced them to
surrender the keys. Shirin organized the task of opening the cells and freeing the prisoners. They carried a stack of keys and rushed to open the prison cells in the first building. They unlocked more than fifty cells before they finally encountered Bahram. Although the shooting had indicated an armed confrontation on the prison grounds, Bahram and his two cellmates were startled by the sudden appearance of the marchers in the corridor, and Reza and Shirin at the open door.

Bahram muttered, “My God, is that you, Shirin?”

Shirin flew toward him and wrapped him in her arms. Tears of joy and excitement rolled from their eyes.

Bahram turned to Reza, “What is happening? How did you all get here?”

Reza hugged him and said, “We have taken over. We are freeing all political prisoners.”

Reza and Shirin helped Bahram stand up and walk out of his cell. The rescuers freed several hundred prisoners from Evin Prison and brought them to the courtyard. Reza assigned a small group to write down the prisoners’ names and addresses and to arrange transportation for them to get to their homes. As if Bahram had been reborn, he decided to stay with them.

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The march resumed and a long procession of cars, trucks and armored vehicles packed with protesters wormed towards their next objective. Reza directed a caravan of trucks to drive towards Tehran Radio and Television Station, which had remained the exclusive voice of the Shah’s appointed government. The trip took several hours and the line of cars stretched for miles. The darkness of night had long gone and dawn had established its presence on the streets of Tehran. A cold breeze had alleviated the smog a bit, and the first rays of sun, though pale, appeared on the roofs.

Shirin, Reza, Bahram, and their comrades in the first truck drove ahead of the others and encountered no further hostile forces. Finally they were only two miles from their target but because all roads were impassable with disabled cars, the triumvirate elected to abandon their vehicle and march on foot along Pahlavi Avenue.

The news of the fall of Evin Prison reached other parts of the city. People sensed that the Shah’s government was about to fall, and that gave them new encouragement. Ever bigger crowds of people filled the streets of Tehran, and many followed the column of Reza, Shirin, and Bahram. Iranian flags waved here and there, and people were shouting revolutionary slogans. They sensed they were observing history in the making, and they might even witness the assault on National Radio and Television and the silencing of the hated station.

It was Sunday, 11 February 1979, when armed demonstrators numbering in the tens of thousands moved down Pahlavi Street and other roads, inexorable like an enormous glacier, towards government buildings and police stations, and crushed the last pockets of resistance by the Shah’s government. The reinforced National Radio and Television Station was the only place remaining in the hands of Bakhhtar’s government, and he knew well that if he lost his communications center, the country would be lost. Facing a roiling mass of people from behind a wall of sandbags, several hundred infantry soldiers and a tank battalion were defending the station.

Behind the scenes, there was a fateful division in the government. Although the prime minister had ordered the military to protect the station at all costs, the military leadership realized they could not hold their position for any length of time. Hoping for the best in the face of the overwhelming force of the marchers, the generals had issued orders for all military personnel to remain strictly neutral between the Shah’s appointed government and the forces of the revolution. However the TV and Radio Station was under the direct command of the prime minister, who commanded his forces to protect the station come what may.

Reza, Shirin and Bahram were among the leaders who positioned themselves in front of the station. Using a loudspeaker, Reza encouraged the soldiers to surrender immediately. He informed them that the city had fallen, and they had no chance to stop the revolution. Then it was Shirin’s turn to use the speaker. She shouted, “Save your life and raise the white flag, otherwise we will attack and kill every one of you!” Waves of shouts inviting the soldiers to surrender filled the air and weakened the defenders’ resolve. The military commander was overwhelmed. He had one order from the Prime Minister and a conflicting one from his own chain of command. He was confused and did not respond to the calls.

Reza and his group ordered the students to shoot at the soldiers’ positions. Bullets slammed against the building and broke several windows. A thick wall of smoke filled the square. The sounds of revolutionary slogans such as “Zendeh Baad Iran” and “Down with the Shah” produced a battle cry for the students and further damaged the military commander’s confidence.

The soldiers were bracing for direct assault when they suddenly saw their commander collapse over a pile of sandbags—he had been shot. Without a leader, the frightened soldiers began to retreat. Reza gave the signal for the final push. A wave of armed marchers rushed forward toward the tanks and climbed over the wall of sandbags. The soldiers fled behind the building, as the crowd overran their positions and opened the gates of the station without encountering any resistance. Armed Fadayan and Mojaheddin members took control of the facilities and confiscated the guns from the retreating soldiers who soon melted away into the crowd. The surprised and ecstatic people filled the courtyard, the gardens, and the parking lots of the station. With the fall of the broadcast station, the last bastion of the Shah’s power had fallen into the abyss of defeat and disaster.

Since the start of the standoff between demonstrators and military, Tehran Radio and Television Station had been silent. Bahram, Shirin, Reza, and several Fadayan and Mojaheddin comrades were the first group to enter the command room where they found the director of the station hiding behind a cabinet. Waving his gun, Reza forced him to power up the station. Bahram wrote several short slogans and gave them to an announcer who read them aloud into the microphone. Meanwhile Shirin, assisted by some staff, found a collection of patriotic Persian songs in the station’s archives and brought them to the main studio. The staff began playing them between the announcements that were being repeated every minute.

Then the most exciting moment in the life of this triumvirate came when Reza adjusted the microphone, tested it, interrupted the patriotic music, and in a firm and provocative voice spoke into the device, “This is Tehran Radio, the genuine and legitimate voice of the Iranian people. This is the voice of the
revolution.” He pushed the microphone toward Bahram and then towards Shirin and they repeated the sentence. They rotated the job and made the announcement repeatedly, adding, “The Iranian marchers have captured the city and freed the radio and tv station.”

Reza wrote three additional slogans and added them to their announcements. The station employees connected additional loud-speakers in the courtyards, gardens, parking lots, and in the area in front of the station building and broadcast the voices of Reza, Shirin or Bahram to the city. The crowd in the streets around the stations, in awe and disbelief, kept repeating the revolutionary slogans as they came over the air.

The sun set behind a thick layer of smoke, and the darkness of night spread over Tehran. The Shah’s government had for all practical purposes ceased to exist. That night was saturated with excitement and filled with patriotic music and songs. The city belonged to the people in the streets while military and police forces retreated to their few remaining garrisons. All night long the people celebrated their victory and danced in the streets.

Different political groups now had their eyes on the television, which had started broadcasting news reports of the day. The supervisory council of the tv and radio station did its best to remain neutral between the nationalists and the mullahs. Therefore they broadcast announcements from Khomeini’s committee as well as those from other groups. That night the television programming ended with the “Ey Iran” anthem; for the first time ever the broadcast day did not end with the Imperial anthem and the photo of the Shah. Nobody was ready to go to bed—in all major cities people remained in the streets until morning, talking, singing, dancing, and keeping an eye out for further developments.

As soon as the interim government appointed by the Islamic Revolutionary Council became aware of the fall of Tehran’s radio and television station, it appointed one of Ayatollah Khomeini’s confidants as director of the station. Within a few hours the newly appointed director and several mullahs, his close religious associates, escorted by members of the secret armed religious revolutionary group known as Hezbollah, made their way into the station and entered the command room. They introduced themselves as Ayatollah Khomeini’s representatives and asked for the control of the command room and the microphones. When the students were reluctant to relinquish control, the armed escorts forced their way through the crowd, pushed Reza, Bahram and Shirin and their group aside, and took over the facilities. The new director immediately discontinued the patriotic music, pulled out a typewritten page, and broadcast the announcement prepared by the Revolutionary Council. He announced, “This is the voice of Islamic Iran. The Islamic revolution has succeeded under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini.” In a shrill voice, the speaker repeatedly affirmed the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty and the success of the Islamic revolution. The message was repeated all night, and instead of patriotic Persian songs, the new director broadcast verses from the Koran.

Bahram, Shirin, Reza, and their supporters were forcefully cleared out of the building. Suddenly, the flabbergasted triumvir found themselves on the sidewalk outside the station, empty-handed. Their fortunes continued to decline. Armed Hezbollah members yelled and pushed and shoved against the celebrating crowd around the station and ordered the people to stop clapping and dancing and soon succeeded in clearing the square. The three friends were caught in the throng, stumbling along while a new message rang in the air: verses from the Koran, interspersed with the jubilant announcement that the Islamic revolution had triumphed in Iran and had terminated 2500 years of Persian monarchy.

The people in the streets were still celebrating. Sporadic shouts of We want a republic! or We want patriotic songs! or Zendeh Baad Iran, could be heard. But Koran recitations continued throughout the night. Bahram, Shirin and Reza decided to leave, and they began the long walk up the hills toward Maryam’s house.

End of Book One

To Autumn
John Keats

I
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o’er-brimm’d their clammy cells.

II
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep,
Drows’d with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Sparès the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.
The early morning sky above Schoharie Valley hung heavy with storm clouds. Thick mist lay about the lowlands, obscuring all but the silo of Kurtz’s small dairy farm. The fog bank rose high at the north end of the valley, its grey fingers reaching up to curl about the red brick clock tower of the Mariaville School. Gustav Kurtz pushed open the screen door of the kitchen, stepped warily out onto the porch and into the wet blanket of thick air. In the June morning the barnyard below him was a brown sea of thick mud. Rivulets of water, silver ribbons against the chocolate surface of the nearly liquid earth, flowed from the bottom of the manure pile off to his right. He marveled at the rainbow-colored streaks that dappled the surface as the rippling water caught the rising sun’s slanting rays. Stumbling down the stairs, he set his boots nearly ankle deep into the muck.

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

He stopped to stare at the manure rake propped against the rotted door jamb. He turned and looked back at the house, its white clapboards black-stained from the narrow eaves down to the broad planks that skirted the roughly laid fieldstone foundation. His gaze circled back to the barn. Years of weather and neglect had turned the red paint a mottled purple and brown. The whole building looked like a bruise on the brightening landscape. Instead of washing away the grime and excrement, the night’s storms had made the farm uglier, covered it with water from all the sewers of the world. With his older brother Bernie gone off to the war in Korea and his father laid up with a badly infected thumb, most of the farm chores had fallen to Gustav’s shoulders. His mother had her hands full with the house and tending the chickens and kitchen garden while trying to nurse her father back to health.

At seventeen, Gustav was handsome and proud, with a square chin, pale blue eyes and a thick mane of nearly white-blond hair which he carefully combed into a sweeping pompadour. He was big for his age too, already nearly a head taller than his father. He had a man’s voice and temper to go with it, just like the old man, who’d survived being a Wehrmacht infantry officer in the war.

“Whyn’t ya go tuth th’ doctor when yuh first cut the thumb in the barn?” he’d yelled at his father over a week ago.

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

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

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

He remembered bits of a conversation he’d overheard in the lunch line at school. It was last fall, and he was behind two town girls he’d been keeping an eye on. He especially liked to watch the one standing next to him, always noticing the way her dark hair caught the light and her eyes flashed excitedly when she turned to look about the classroom. It never failed to catch his attention. He didn’t dare look at her face now. Just standing close to feel the warmth of her body and hear the sound of her voice would be enough. The girls were looking down at their trays, talking. Gustav strained to hear them over the noise from the kitchen and the shouts and laughter that echoed off the yellowed tile walls and floor.

“Oh, yeah, him.” said the one.

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

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

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

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

He stood, his eyes tearing, his thoughts clouded with the impossibility of ever knowing one of the town girls, of ever breaking free from the farm, of ever washing away the shit smell that made him part of the vile earth that clung to his boots. He looked around desperately, and his eye caught a burst of color against the bare ground in front of the chicken coop. Stumbling toward it, Gustav saw a toy wheelbarrow, once his, that his mother had planted with flowers she’d nursed from seeds in late winter. Blossoms of white, pink, and dark violet nodded gaily above the brown sea of thick mud. Rivulets of water, silver ribbons against the broad planks that skirted the roughly laid fieldstone foundation.

He remembered bits of a conversation he’d overheard in the classroom. It never failed to catch his attention. He didn’t dare look at her face now. Just standing close to feel the warmth of her body and hear the sound of her voice would be enough. The girls were looking down at their trays, talking. Gustav strained to hear them over the noise from the kitchen and the shouts and laughter that echoed off the yellowed tile walls and floor.

“Oh, yeah, him.” said the one.

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

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

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

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Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. He bent down, reached out his hands, and gently wiped at the glazed surface of rainwater. Again and again he passed his hands over the red paint, his palms squeaking along the surface, feeling as though he were gathering fistfuls of coldfire crystals. He held his shining hands close to his face, breathing in the cool fresh scent. Through his fingers he saw the red wheelbarrow glowing beneath him.
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 is a new book by San Antonio’s Bonnie Lyons, Boredroom.

And So Now We Come to It, a collection of 36 elegies and five interludes written by H. Palmer Hall during the several months preceding his death, has been recently published by Luis A. Cortez, the managing editor of Pecan Grove Press. The book may be ordered by sending a request and contribution check to:

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

Word Design Studio

www.WordDesignStudio.com

Word Design Studio, founded in 1998, is committed to publishing selected high quality poetry collections, anthologies, and other paperback books, fiction and non-fiction. Word Design Studio is author-friendly and strives for author satisfaction through every step of the process toward the final published product. Editor Valerie Martin Bailey has been in the writing, editing, and publishing field since 1970. An accomplished writer and award-winning poet, she dedicates much of her time to promoting poetry at the local, state, and national levels. The latest books from Word Design Studio are Shelia Darst’s, A Poet’s Palette, and Loretta Burns Vaughan’s, What Angels Bless. For more information, please visit www.worddesignstudio.com.

Rebozos by Carmen Tafolla

Wins International Latino Book Award, First Place for Best Book of Bilingual Poetry, First Place for Best Art Book, and First Place for Best Gift Book

This bilingual collection of poems by Carmen Tafolla celebrates both the rebozo as a cultural icon of Mexico and the series of rebozo-inspired paintings by Mexican-California artist Catalina Gárate. These ekphrastic poems—art inspired by art—give voices to the women of Gárate’s paintings, voices of strength and endurance, joy and sorrow.

Wings Press

www.wingspress.com

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, the New Poets of America Award, the San Pablo Review Award for Poetry Excellence, and the IMPAC Dublin International Literary Award shortlist.

Wings Press has published 22 new titles in 2013

POETRY

Lorna Dee Cervantes’ Sueno, a bilingual collection of Neruda’s odes; Sublime Blue, with translations by William Pitt Root, as well as a major new collection of Root’s own poetry, Strange Angels; Robert Fink’s Strange You Never Knew; Frances H Hatfield’s Rudiments of Flight; Margaret Randall’s The Rhizome as a Field of Broken Bones; Keith Flynn’s Colony Collapse Disorder (which just won the North Carolina Literary Prize); Celeste Guzmán Mendoza’s Beneath the Halo; and the 30th anniversary edition of Texas Poet Laureate Rosemary Catacalos’ exquisite Again for the First Time. Wings Press also issued three handmade poetry chapbooks this year: Margaret Randall’s Daughter of Lady Jaguar Shark; David Taylor’s The Log from the Sea of Cortez, and Rosemary Catacalos’ Begin Here, which features handmade paper covers printed by letterpress.

FICTION

Alma Luz Villanueva’s “novel of cosmic erotica,” Song of the Golden Scorpion; two novels in translation, Alicia Kozameh’s Ostrich Legs and Paula Varsavsky’s No One Said a Word; a new edition of Cecile Pineda’s Face (a finalist for the 2013 Neustadt Prize); and Maria Espinosa’s Dark Plums.

NON-FICTION

Bob Flynn’s powerful political inquiry, Lawful Abuse: How the Century of the Child Became the Century of the Corporation; James Hoggard’s new collection of personal essays, The Devil’s Fingers; Jim Harter’s fascinating Early Farm Tractors: A History in Advertising Line Art; a new edition of Cecile Pineda’s important Devil’s Tango: How I Learned the Fukushima Step by Step; and a stand-alone ebook by Bill Wright, A Bridge from Darkness to Light: Thirteen Young Photographers Explore their Afghanistan. All of these titles were issued simultaneously as ebooks and are available globally.
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ports non-profit organizations that seek to improve
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Poetry & Arts Events in San Antonio

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


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

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


Tuesdays 10:30 pm – Puro Slam – The Heights–9315 N. Broadway (just north of 410). Weekly open mic certified by the National Poetry Slam allows poets to deliver their work and get heckled. DJ Donnie Dee spins before and after the show. Sign up begins at 9:30 pm. Slam begins @ 10:30 pm. For more information visit www.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, Blvdg. 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 THEATRE—Opened in 1929 and restored in 1989 as a performing arts center, the Majestic is said to be one of the finest “atmospheric” theaters ever built. www.majesticempire.com

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

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

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

WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE—Extensive 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
from September to June

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 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.