Questions for Dr. Ricardo Romo

“Woman at the Center of Red” by Cyra S. Dumitru
“Political Poetry” by William Wenthe
Three Poems by Mobi Warren
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South Texas is a popular winter destination for migratory fowl, such as the whooping crane and orange-crowned warbler, as well as Mexican free-tailed bats and monarch butterflies. Another species often seen wintering in the area is the snow bird, a flightless species that often flees to the region when harsh northern winters send the temperature plummeting.

Temperatures here are warmer (usually), but uninitiated snow birds, especially those who settle in or around the Texas Hill Country, may encounter a phenomenon unique to the area: mountain cedar pollen. The mountain cedar—or more properly, the Ashe juniper—is one of few trees worldwide that germinate in the winter. Furthermore, it is among the minority of trees that are dioecious, either male or female, as opposed to the more normal hermaphroditic arrangement. On windy days in January and early February, observers can see yellow clouds of cedar pollen carried along on the breeze as male trees attempt to germinate female trees in the vicinity. This mechanism works well for the cedar trees, but for snow birds and year-round residents of the area with cedar pollen allergies, the results are less pleasant.

If you are hunkered down inside trying to escape either the cold weather or the cedar pollen, this issue of *Voices de la Luna* offers a respite from the elements of nature, reflections on the season, and a brilliant contrast to the muted colors that may be surrounding you at the moment. On the cover and throughout the magazine, the photographs of Ricardo Romo, president of the University of Texas at San Antonio and accomplished photographer, provide explosions of color from the people of Guatemala. Cyra Dumitru, poet and educator at St. Mary’s University, offers an ekphrastic poem that reflects on one of Romo’s striking photos. The issue also features poetry from poets of all ages, from youth to adults, some—like Mobi Warren, Catherine-Grace Patrick, and Charlotte Renk—well-known poets with many publications to their names, others published here for the first time. Even William Shakespeare raises his hoary head from the grave to comment on winter. Essays and short fiction also feature prominently in the issue, including a reflection on Southeast Asia from our globe-trotting managing editor, Mo Saidi, and an essay by San Antonio native Nan Cuba entitled “Writing through Grief.”

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Reviews of books written by local authors grace the pages as well. Particularly notable are reviews of *Eyes in the Dark*, a book of dreams and interpretations by *Voices* co-founder Jim Branderburg, and of *Underground Musicians*, a book of poetry by Carol Coffee Reposa, *Voices*’ poetry editor. As usual, the magazine profiles the San Antonio arts scene, including a special article on theatrical performances by local theater critic and author Jasmina Wellinghoff. Finally, *Voices* celebrates the lives of two Nobel laureates who died recently: Doris Lessing, Nobel laureate in literature (2007), and Nelson Mandela, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

Whether you’re someone who enjoys the cold weather that winter brings or simply endures it, cozy up with this issue of *Voices* and remember that spring is just around the corner. And if you’re visiting the San Antonio area, don’t forget the Alavert!
Dr. Ricardo Romo has served as president of The University of Texas at San Antonio since May 1999. In addition to his many achievements as an academic historian and a leader in the field of higher education, Romo is also a talented photographer, who has contributed photos to numerous regional exhibits, including Havana and Small Town Texas, from which photos were selected for an exhibit in China, Infinite Horizons: Visions of Texas. His photos were also exhibited recently at Gallery Nord in San Antonio.

Romo and his wife, Dr. Harriett Romo, are avid art collectors, and recently more than sixty prints from their collection were on display at San Antonio’s McNay Art Museum in an exhibit entitled Estampas de la Raza. The traveling exhibit portrays the Latino experience in the United States through the work of forty-four Mexican-American and Latino artists. These amazing prints are now on view at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and will continue to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, followed by the Vincent Price Art Museum in Los Angeles.

For more information on Ricardo Romo, including his thoughts on his career and other issues, see his interview with Mo H Saidi on page 6 of this issue.

**Benjamin Franklin’s Thirteen Virtues**

1. TEMPERANCE. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. SILENCE. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. ORDER. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. FRUGALITY. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
6. INDUSTRY. Lose no time; be always employ’d in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. SINCERITY. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. JUSTICE. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. MODERATION. Avoid extrems; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, cloaths, or habitation.
11. TRANQUILLITY. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. CHASTITY. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.
13. HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

**Correction:** The poem entitled “Carnival” in the October 2013 issue of Voices de la Luna and attributed to Peter Holland was actually written by Blake. We regret the error.
Featured Poet

Three Poems
Mobi Warren

monarch drought

another layer lost,
the world thins,
imagination fades

erased:
the orange swoon of monarchs
returning from high fir forests

ribbed eggs that jewel
the underside of bitter leaves

the hunger of ravenous larvae,
supple acrobats lit by dew

jade cases ringed with gold
our house of transformation
gone

Once

Under another Big Box
in the marrow of limestone caves,
silent albinos, rare blind beetles,
eyeless spiders, lived.

Before the ground above them sealed,
raindrops wiggled through rock,
fell into secret pools with the plink
of xylophone or harp.

Jointed bodies of spun glass
hinted light, defined thin lines
of existence suited to this
one place, once.

Sewing a Square for the 350 Reasons Quilt
For International Climate Action Day: October 24, 2009

The needle’s slim body
skims currents of cloth

a folded Japanese handkerchief
in which blue crabs scurry.

A remnant of red silk
warms the quilted backs

of three whooping cranes—
sunrise in Aransas Refuge.

The voice of needle through silk
is the sound of marsh grass
ruffled by sea breeze.

Through cotton, the sound
of feathers dipped in black night
folded over snow-white backs.

This is the sound of rest
after long migration

the murmur of shallow tides
against slender ankles

the ease attained
after fierce and improbable effort.

This is the last wild flock
of whooping cranes

whose fidelity of flight
binds salt marsh and boreal forest.

Here, held in my hands
against a rising sea.

Mobi Warren is a middle school math teacher, a poet and fiction writer, and an environmental activist. Her poems, which have been published in local and regional journals and anthologies, have also been posted in public buses during National Poetry Month. For several years she led Haiku Hikes at Government Canyon State Natural Area, and she is co-organizer of the annual Words for Birds reading at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center during National Poetry Month. Founder of the San Antonio chapter of the international grassroots climate change organization 350.org, she has organized poets and others to speak out about the urgency of climate change and the need to work towards solutions. She is the translator of several books by Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, including Old Path White Clouds (a biography of the Buddha) and The Dragon Prince: Stories and Legends from Vietnam, both from Parallax Press. A lover of insects and a citizen scientist with the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project, Mobi has recently completed a young adult novel that joins the Texas Hill Country to sixth-century BCE Crete and concerns the plight of endangered honeybees.
Dr. Ricardo Romo became the fifth president of The University of Texas at San Antonio in May 1999. Under his leadership, UTSA was named by the Texas Legislature as an emerging Tier One research university and a leader in providing access to excellence in teaching, research, and community outreach. During Romo’s tenure UTSA’s enrollment has grown nearly 70 percent, and the number of doctoral programs has increased from three to twenty-four. A native of San Antonio’s West Side, Romo graduated from Fox Tech High School and attended the University of Texas at Austin on a track scholarship, where he earned a B.S. degree in education (1967). Romo also holds a master’s degree in history from Loyola Marymount University (1970) and a Ph.D. in history from UCLA (1975). A nationally respected urban historian, Romo is the author of East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio, now in its ninth printing (one in Spanish). Romo has received many honors in his career. In 2007 he received the Isabel la Católica award, the highest award given to non-Spanish subjects, bestowed by King Juan Carlos of Spain. In 2008 he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Texas Exes Alumni Association. In 2010 he received the San Antonio North Chamber Dolph Briscoe Salute to Excellence Award. In 2011 Romo was presented the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Chief Executive Leadership Award and was appointed by President Obama to the White House Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. In 2012 Romo received the Colonel W. T. Bondurant Sr. Distinguished Humanitarian Award from the San Antonio Academy Alumni Council. In March 2013 he was given the prestigious Clark Kerr Award for Distinguished Leadership in Higher Education from the University of California, Berkeley, and the Wheaton College Otis Social Justice Award for promoting social justice through education and public service. Romo is married to Dr. Harriett Romo, a UTSA professor of sociology and director of the UTSA Mexico Center and Bank of America Child and Adolescent Policy Research Institute (CAPRI).

Mo H Saidi: Dr. Romo, besides being a recognized scholar, author, successful leader of a large university and an acclaimed artist, you were also the first Texan to run the mile in less than four minutes. Has that record been broken?

Dr. Ricardo Romo: I ran track in high school at Fox Tech. In my sophomore year, I was running a sub-five-minute mile. After I went to the University of Texas at Austin on a track scholarship, I became the first Texan to run it in under four minutes. That record lasted for 41 years. I wasn’t too upset when it was broken, though, because the new record was set by a fabulous UT runner. His name is Leonel Manzano. After setting a new record, he went on to win a silver medal at the 2012 Olympic Games. He was the first Longhorn miler to ever make the U.S. Olympic team. So, I thought, it’s not so bad to have your record broken when it’s by an Olympian!

You grew up on San Antonio’s West Side. How did it prepare you to achieve all that you have?

I come from a large family and there are a lot of Romos on the West Side of San Antonio. In fact, within two blocks of the home where I lived, there were thirty-eight other Romos. They were my aunts, uncles, cousins. We’re a family of entrepreneurs. My father ran a grocery store. One of my uncles owned a restaurant; another ran an auto parts store. My grandmother was a midwife. Being around them, I learned a lot about the value of working hard, always doing your best and staying focused on your goals. Those are life lessons I carry with me every day.

Your book East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio, now in its ninth printing, is a masterpiece. Did you find any similarities between the West San Antonio and East Los Angeles barrios?

There are certainly some similarities between East L.A. and West San Antonio. In my book, I talk about the struggle of the barrio in East Los Angeles. Like East L.A., the Mexican-American community on the West Side of San Antonio has had its own struggles. However, both communities have something in common: They take pride in what they’ve overcome by telling these stories in hundreds of murals throughout the barrios, which have become the pride and joy of these neighborhoods.

Latin American writers have been recognized internationally by winning six Nobel Prizes, as well as numerous other accolades. What does UTSA do to introduce these writers to students?

At UTSA, various departments and degree programs teach students about the importance of Latin American literature. Students in the College of Education and Human Development, College of Liberal and Fine Arts and the Honors College all have the opportunity to learn from the works of authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Pablo Neruda, as well as authors like Sandra Cisneros. UTSA also provides students a unique opportunity to learn directly from authors like San Antonio’s first poet laureate, Carmen Tafolla, a senior lecturer at UTSA who brings her literary works into the classroom, and John Phillip Santos, a distinguished scholar in Mestizo Cultural Studies in our Honors College.

Your art collection portraying the Latino experience in the United States and your own photography work have been exhibited widely. What type of response have you received from those exhibits?

Some of the work I’ve exhibited includes art and photography from China, South Africa, Cuba and Mexico. Those exhibits have all been well received. People enjoy learning about other cultures, and having visual representations helps contribute to that experience. I’m glad to know that my exhibits have helped stimulate curiosity and learning.

UTSA is growing significantly, and soon you will have your 100,000th graduate. What is the most striking reason for this growth?

Unquestionably, UTSA is a university of first choice. Top students want to come here because they know they will get opportunities starting early in their college careers that they may not have elsewhere, including working side-by-side with world-class faculty and researchers. They’ll get a great education and have the opportunity to be involved in ground-breaking research. Students also understand that UTSA is well on its way to recognition as a Tier One institution and they want to be associated with a highly respected university.

Thank you very much Dr. Romo.
Voices Poetry Workshop at San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind

On 5 December 2013, Voices de la Luna sponsored a poetry therapy workshop led by James Brandenburg at the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind. Brandenburg read dreams and poetry, and the twelve participants interacted enthusiastically, asking many questions. At the end of the workshop, the participants responded to writing prompts and shared their pieces with the group. In the Western classical tradition and inspired by Homer, author of the Iliad and the Odyssey and the greatest of ancient Greek epic poets, the blind employees of the SALB participated in writing poetry and presenting poems. These pieces, and other entries composed by visually impaired authors that are received by 15 March, will be judged for the Fundraising Gala in April 2014 co-sponsored by the Lighthouse for the Blind and Voices de la Luna. The winners will read their pieces at the Fundraising Gala on Wednesday, 9 April 2014, at The Bright Shawl, where the two organizations will jointly celebrate National Poetry Month.

Infinite Vision
Mike Gilliam
President and CEO, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind

My imagination is my canvas
Unfettered by my eyes
The World my palette
The spectrum too limiting
Free to dream and create
Reality doesn’t distract
True blackness isn’t a curse
But a blessing of vibrant visions
Hearing your heart and feeling your soul
That’s what I rely upon
Physicality doesn’t intervene or bias
A true equality pervades
My World is what I envision
Not what sight can force upon me.
Maybe the
World needs more blindness?

News & Notes

A History of Libraries

When James W. P. Campbell was studying architecture as a student, he looked in vain for a book on the history of library architecture. Now, twenty years later, he has written one. Together with photographer Will Pryce, Campbell visited eighty-two libraries in twenty-one countries, taking photos and researching their stories. The result is The Library: A World History, published by the University of Chicago Press. Campbell, senior university lecturer and fellow in both architecture and history of art in Queens’ College, Cambridge, is both an architect and an architectural historian, so he is ideally suited to author such a visually stunning masterpiece.

The book transports the reader not only through space but also time, covering libraries as geographically and temporally distant as ancient Mesopotamia and modern China. For more information on the book and its authors, see “The Secrets of Libraries” (www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2013/12/14/new-england-literary-news/V6IHHrriRJhx9hiCNUGIbL/story.html) and www.arct.cam.ac.uk/people/jwpc2@cam.ac.uk/.
Reyna Grande

February 7, 2014—7:30 p.m.
Co-sponsored by the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
and in cooperation with Gemini Ink

Reyna Grande’s latest book, The Distance Between Us (2012), was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and was hailed by the Los Angeles Times as “the Angela’s Ashes of the modern Mexican immigrant experience.” Grande’s first novel, Across a Hundred Mountains (2006), received a 2010 Latino Books into Movies Award, a 2007 American Book Award, and the 2006 El Premio Aztlán Literary Award. Her second critically acclaimed novel, Dancing With Butterflies (2009), received the 2010 International Latino Book Award. Born in Iguala, Guerrero in Mexico, the author was two years old when her father left for the United States to find work. Her mother followed her father north two years later, leaving Reyna and her siblings behind in Mexico. In 1985, nine years old, Reyna entered the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant. She later went on to become the first person in her family to graduate from college. Reyna Grande transferred from Pasadena City College in 1996 and earned her B.A. in Creative Writing and Film and Video from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Later she earned an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Antioch University. She lives in Los Angeles.

Selah Saterstrom

March 7, 2014—7:30 p.m.

Selah Saterstrom is the author of the novels The Pink Institution (2004), The Meat and Spirit Plan (2007), and the forthcoming Slab (2013), all published by Coffee House Press. She is also the author of Tiger Goes to the Dogs, a 2013 limited edition letterpress project published by Nor By Press. Her prose, poetry, and interviews have appeared in such journals as The Black Warrior Review, Postroad, Tarptaulin Sky, and Fourteen Hills, among others. With visual artist Heide Hatry, she has collaborated on the text/image projects Heads and Tales (2009) and Not a Rose (2012), both of which have been widely exhibited in museums and galleries in the United States and in Europe. A Mississippi native, she has an M.F.A. from Goddard College and a M.Phil. from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. She is an associate professor in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Denver and also teaches in the Naropa Summer Writing Program. Currently she is completing a book of essays on reading and writing practices after genocide, along with a poetry collection and a fourth novel, based on her time spent in Cambodia.

Sagebrush Review

www.sagebrushreview.org

The Sagebrush Review is a literary journal run by the students of The University of Texas at San Antonio. Sagebrush is classified by the U.S. Government as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It is the mission of the Sagebrush Review to collect submissions from talented students across Texas and publish the best in art, photography, and literature this state has to offer. Every year the Sagebrush Review publishes one journal of the most highly rated submissions. These submissions are judged by Sagebrush staff and editors, the majority of whom are also active in the fine arts community in San Antonio.

Volume 8 (2013) is now available. Sagebrush Review is currently receiving submissions for its 9th volume, which will be publicized in Spring 2014. Sagebrush features fiction, poetry, nonfiction, photography, and art and is open to all genres and styles of writing.

American Letters & Commentary

www.amletters.org

UTSA is proud to sponsor and house the nationally recognized literary journal American Letters & Commentary, co-edited by David Ray Vance and Catherine Kasper. Now in its twenty-third year of production, AL&C is a nationally distributed literary annual devoted to experimental writing and art.

The editors say of Issue #24:

We begin this issue with Matthea Harvey’s captivating photographs of miniatures suspended in ice, followed by what we think is a compelling selection of poems, short stories, translations, and book reviews. Conceptually, we like the idea of extending the frozen miniature imagery in Harvey’s photographs to the frozen landscape of Frances Post’s “Self-Portrait in Antarctica,” and J’Lyn Chapman’s “A Poetics Of Absolute Time and Space,” which examines the power of W.G. Sebald’s work (a writer who was also fascinated with miniatures). Of course, to some extent, every poem or story is a miniature of each individual’s world vision suspended on the page. And given Suspended Animatio refers to “the slowing of life processes by external means without termination,” we hope each work continues to live with your reading.
Your earthen-face pulls me in: quiet center of red, red that drapes, frames and warms in cascade of woolen rebozo.

Years and concentration deepen your face as you climb steep stone stairs, no railing to lean upon. Instead you clutch the red as if it might catch you should you misstep. The hand that is hidden: does it carry plantains and peppers fresh from the market?

Below, a street extends, filled with people: a horizon above which you slowly rise, solid in a world of motion. Red and white blossoms spill wild along the edge of the stairs, as if hastening to meet you, offering their color on this chill day.

Does your journey home begin with this ascent? Have you far to travel once you reach the higher path?

Have you glanced up, noticed the photographer eyeing you with his lens?

How many stairs have you climbed since this image was taken? How many flowers have bloomed, faded, yielded their color, while your red rebozo and your earthen-face hold fast?
Since the time of Aeschylus, the stage has served as a live format for entertainment, enlightenment, and the sharing of ideas between the thespian artists and their audiences. That tradition is alive and well in San Antonio, where multiple companies present a wealth of theatrical options in a variety of venues at affordable prices.

The San Pedro Playhouse was built in 1930 to house performances by the San Antonio Little Theater. Now under the leadership of president and CEO Asia Ciaravino, the renamed Playhouse San Antonio is better than ever, with two active stages and programming that ranges from big Broadway musicals to edgy contemporary plays, mostly by American playwrights. This fall, Playhouse SA scored big with Les Miserables, easily one of the best musicals ever created, as well as with Wittenberg, a clever brainchild of native San Antonian David Davalos, involving Hamlet—yes, that Hamlet—Martin Luther and Dr. Faustus.

Coming up in 2014 are Stephen Sondheim’s Company (Feb. 7 – Mar. 2); the beloved classic Funny Girl (June 6–29), and the rock opera Tommy, told through the music of the legendary The Who (Aug. 1–24). In the smaller Cellar space, the lineup includes intriguing fare, such as Venus in Fur, a sexy, provocative comedy praised by critics (Jan. 24 – Feb. 9); Clybourne Park, about issues of race, community, and gentrification (Mar. 21 – Apr. 6), and Dead Man’s Cell Phone, which is certainly a curiosity-inducing title (May 16 – June 1). (See www.theplayhousesa.org for more information.)

Much newer, but already established, is the Classic Theater of San Antonio that presents both older classics like works by Shakespeare and Molière and more recent ones. Acting and directing are top-notch and it’s practically the only place in town where you can see iconic dramas such as Uncle Vanya or Hedda Gabler. Two twentieth century classics are scheduled for spring: Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman and Noel Coward’s Private Lives. (See www.classictheatre.org.)

The Classic is about to move to a new location on Fredericksburg Road, where it will be renting space from the Woodlawn Theater, home to another lively and active company, Woodlawn Theater Inc., currently under the artistic direction of stage veteran Greg Hinojosa. Built in 1946, the Woodlawn hosted the premiere of John Wayne’s movie The Alamo in 1960 and is part of the historic architecture of the Art Deco neighborhood. Owners Kurt and Sherry Wehner are working on the restoration of the structure, which recently received the historic landmark designation from the city. (See www.woodlawntheatre.org.)

The Vexler Theater, inside the Jewish Community Center, is another playhouse that reliably offers a good selection of plays, comedies, and musicals. The psychological thriller When You Comin’ Back, Red Ryder? and the perennially popular 

continued on page 25 ...
Eyes in the Dark:
A Memoir of Dreams and Poetry
by James Brandenburg
Reviewed by Mo H Saidi

Perusing *Eyes in the Dark: A Memoir of Dreams and Poetry* is an intriguing opportunity to witness the remarkable journey of a poet from childhood, through chaotic episodes of his early life, and into the peaceful reconciliation of later times. Memories of childhood appear frequently in his dreams, which eventually lead him on a path of discovery. Brandenburg’s dreams force him to search for clues to his unconscious world. Thus, he begins a journey that passes through challenging times and explores the many confusing feelings left over from childhood, which often reappear in his dreams.

The book describes the path Brandenburg followed to unlock the mysteries of human dreams. Awash in a sea of ambiguity and frequent reflection about his childhood, he often wondered about the meaning of his dreams. Poetry also came to play a role in his life, as told in his poem, “Ambiguity”: “Just wanted to dangle a bit over the edge, / then come back to reality.”

The turning point in Brandenburg’s search for answers regarding the meanings of human dreams occurred in 2004, when he attended a series of seminars on fairy tales and dreams. The lectures introduced him to C.G. Jung’s theory about dreams and human unconscious. By embarking on a journey that ultimately led him to the C.G. Jung Institute in Switzerland, he studied dream analysis using Jungian dream symbols. Throughout the book he quotes selected dreams, uses them to unravel the mysteries of his life through Jung’s theory, and in the process encounters profound revelations regarding the relationship with his father, son, and wife.

The book, divided into four chapters, includes courageous lyrical passages full of serious revelations. In the first chapter, Brandenburg confronts his childhood. In the poem “When I Was a Kid,” he looks back with some resentment, “When I was a kid / I wondered / who made God, / and I believed everything / adults said,” while in “Finding the Past (For Jerel),” he connects his past, his childhood, to the present and writes, “… / never dreamed / you would grow up / in my past / nor I would grow old / in yours.”

In the second chapter, “Persona,” the father figure is a parting memory. Brandenburg describes the critical period of his life in twenty-eight eloquent poems and settles down, at peace with himself, in the last chapter, “Reconciliation.” Commenting on a dream in “Out of Darkness,” he writes, “Our journeys include pain, sufferings, hurts, the forgiveness, the hope, and the joy. Ultimately, Brandenburg finds peace and reconciliation in helping others, which appears to be the cornerstone of *Eyes in the Dark: A Memoir of Dreams and Poetry*. Poets save their souls by saving others.

The Book Thief
by Marcus Zusak
Reviewed by Lou Taylor

To encourage people to read a book in which Death is the narrator and most of the characters die in the end sounds like a cruel trick. In the case of *The Book Thief*, it is an invitation to go deeply into the hearts of the citizens of a small German town during World War II and to experience the human spirit at its best. It is also an invitation to experience the necessity of story for survival.

Author Marcus Zusak invites the reader to the fictional town of Molchin and into the home of Hans and Rosa Hubermann, a house painter and laundress, who take Liesel Meminger as their foster daughter. Liesel’s brother dies on the trip to Molchin, and Liesel is in need of unconditional love and support. She receives it in spades from Hans and Rosa.

The characters in *The Book Thief* are ordinary people who live extraordinary lives in conditions that grow worse every day. None of them are perfect, but they live their lives with decency and integrity.

In addition to making Liesel their daughter, the Hubermanns hide a young Jew named Max Vandenburg in the basement for two years because of a promise Hans made to Max’s father, who was killed in World War I. This act of kindness not only puts their lives in danger but insures that they will have less food.

Ilsa Hubermann, the mayor’s wife, makes her library available to Liesel, who is hungry for books and learning, and she finally gives her a blank book which begins her writing career.

Max Vandenburg creates writing paper by cutting out the pages of *Mein Kampf*, painting them white with Hans’s leftover house paint, and creating stories and pictures as gifts for Liesel.

Rudy Steiner, a boy who lives next door, is Liesel’s friend and partner in crime. His claim to fame is the “Jesse Owens” incident, a result of his admiration for Jesse Owens’ athletic feats during the 1937 Olympics.

Death becomes a frequent visitor and gently takes the souls of the citizens of Molchin as they are killed in the war.

Drawing from the stories of his German parents who later emigrated to Australia, the author creates unforgettable characters and scenes of life in World War II Germany.

But *The Book Thief* is much more than an account of small-town life in wartime Germany. It is a story of the human spirit. It is a book about life and death and the eternal necessity of telling our stories in every circumstance. It helps us to experience the power of self-giving love to redeem lives.

Do not be fooled by the fact that is often categorized as “Young Adult.” *The Book Thief* will challenge and inspire mature readers. I am eagerly awaiting Marcus Zusak’s next book.
I lived in South Africa for thirteen and a half months in 1988 and 1989, first teaching in a small Baptist college in Cape Town and then studying for about three months at the University of Stellenbosch. Before I learned I would be going to South Africa, I knew two things about the country: the evils of apartheid and the courage of people like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. As soon as I found out I would be living there for the next year, I immediately started reading all I could about the country’s history and its current political climate. It was with both trepidation and excitement that I stepped off the plane at the D.F. Malan Airport (now renamed Cape Town International Airport) with my wife and baby daughter. I knew it would be an exciting time, but I didn’t know that my year in the country would turn out to be the most educational and inspirational experience of my life.

Nelson Mandela was in jail on Robben Island when I arrived in Cape Town. On occasion when I was near the bay, I would look out at the island and wonder what kind of life he was living. There were no official news reports on Mandela, because the South African government prohibited any mention of Mandela in either the television media (which they completely controlled) or the print media (which they largely controlled). It was illegal to print any of Mandela’s words, or those of other South African opponents of apartheid like Helen Joseph, Thabo Mbeki, or Joe Slovo. It was also illegal to publish any photos of Mandela more recent than 1962, when he was arrested and incarcerated.

Saying there were no official news reports on Mandela is not the same as saying there was no news at all. It’s just that if you wanted to find news about him, you had to read it in unofficial newspapers or on flyers stapled to telephone poles or taped to the sides of buildings. That’s also how people found out about protest meetings featuring South African notables like Archbishop Tutu, Frank Chikane, or Allan Boesak. Anti-apartheid activists would drive around in the morning putting up the flyers; police or SADF members would drive by afterwards and remove the flyers; other activists would then swing by the same locations and repost the flyers. If you happened to drive by after the activists had posted a flyer and before the government forces had removed it, you could find out where and when the meeting would be held. Usually the flyers announced meetings the same day so that the government would not have time to block them.

I vividly remember one meeting held at a large downtown church in Cape Town. On that occasion Tutu, Boesak, and Chikane were all present, along with many others involved in the movement. I went with a couple of my students, who were intent on educating me about what really went on in South Africa. At the end of the meeting I sang for the first time—not the last—what was then the unofficial national anthem, “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika,” “God Bless Africa.” After a meeting that lasted little more than an hour, and was attended by a standing-room only crowd, we exited the church to find that the entire building was surrounded by police with rifles. I was terrified, but my students directed me through a roundabout path away from the police. We learned later that the police had fired water cannons on the crowd and beat some of them with sjamboks, leather whips that were regularly carried by police and SADF personnel. Nelson Mandela wasn’t at the meeting in person, but he was definitely there in spirit, as every speaker mentioned him by name and lauded the sacrifice he had made, and was still making, for his country.

During my time in South Africa I taught religion classes to my students, and they taught me how to put faith into action as nonviolent opponents of an evil government system. I have no doubt that the lessons they taught me were both more profound and more long lasting than the lessons I taught them. It was in South Africa that I was first exposed to liberation theology, a movement that got its name from Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez’s book A Theology of Liberation. I read every book on the subject I could get my hands on, books by Latin Americans like Jon Sobrino, Juan Segundo, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, and José Míguez Bonino; African Americans like James Cone; and even Jewish and Palestinian theologies of liberation written by a Jew and a Palestinian who struggled together for peace in the Middle East. I also read The Kairos Document, a South African biblical and theological manifesto calling for an end to apartheid. I talked to academics, clergy, and laypeople who struggled against apartheid. I was taken on a tour of black townships, slums (at best) and shantytowns (at worst), many with limited running water and electricity, where the black population of the cities was forced to live by a law called the Group Areas Act. Many rural blacks lived in so-called “homelands,” also called “Bantustans,” which were analogous to the reservations Native Americans were forced to live on. It was during my first visit to one of these townships that I was introduced to the word “conscientization,” the purposeful exposure of a person to shocking conditions in order to force a confrontation with his or her own preconceptions about the world, good, and evil. I learned firsthand about structural injustice, both from what I observed and from the stories I heard people tell. One of my students, for example, was beaten and forcibly removed from a whites-only beach because he was black. Other students told me about their high schools being shut down for over a year because of unrest among the student body. My time in South Africa resulted in a profound conversion experience in every sense of the word.

The whole time I was in South Africa, rumors abounded that Nelson Mandela would be released from prison any day, but that day never seemed to come. In my final weeks in the country I witnessed mass rallies of anti-apartheid activists on the streets of Cape Town, and I heard about other protests around the country. About three months after returning to the U.S., we woke up at 4:00 in the morning to witness a miracle: Nelson Mandela walking out of prison, his 1962-era black hair from the official photos replaced by a stately gray. He smiled, waved to the crowds, and even danced. I’m not much of a cryer, but I have to admit that I had tears in my eyes as I watched him walk into a cheering crowd that morning. And even though I knew he had been very sick for a long time, I got tears in my eyes again the day I heard he had died. The first thing I did was text my daughter from my office and ask her to hang my South African flag on the flagpole on my front porch as a tribute to Nelson Mandela. Father of the nation, Nobel Peace Prize winner, first black president of South Africa, proponent of nonviolent change, and inspiration to billions around the globe, including me, Nelson Mandela was perhaps the greatest man who has lived during my lifetime.

RIP Nelson Mandela, and Nkosi sikelel’ iAfrika!
Art in the City

McNay Art Museum
www.mcnyart.org

Medieval & Renaissance Art

In 1955, Dr. and Mrs. Frederic Oppenheimer, friends of Mrs. McNay, gave to the museum their collection of medieval and Renaissance sculptures and paintings, which they had been forming since the 1920s. The paintings, primarily altarpiece fragments and portraits, include notable works by Albrecht Bouts, the Master of Frankfurt, and Jan Gossaert (called Mabuse) among the Northern masters; and Taddeo di Bartolo and Alvise Vivarini among the Italian school artists. Sculptures in the Oppenheimer collection, several of which are parts of larger works or ensembles, are French, German, or Netherlandish. Installed in three rooms on the second floor of the museum, the Oppenheimer collection provides a fascinating parallel to the religious art of New Mexico collected by Mrs. McNay.

Witte Museum
www.wittemuseum.org

The World through Magic Lanterns
June 2013 – June 2014

From the 1700s until the early 1900s magic lanterns were used for teaching and storytelling. The devices utilized concepts that brought modern film projection and television into existence. The exhibition features examples of magic lanterns from the finest collection known, The Jack Judson Magic Lantern Castle Collection. Visitors will see all aspects of making a magic lantern show in the 1800s, the equipment used and projections of the final presentations.

San Antonio Symphony
www.sasymphony.org

During the winter and spring of 2014, the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, led by music director Maestro Sebastian Lang-Lessing, will play 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. For more information, please call the Symphony Box Office at (210) 554-1010.

San Antonio Museum of Art
www.samuseum.org

Upcoming Exhibitions

Thomas Sully: Painted Performance
February 8, 2014 – May 11, 2014

The American Romantic painter Thomas Sully (1783–1872) had a lifelong connection to and love for the theatre, associations that were critical components of his artistic imagination. When viewed through the lens of theatre, Sully’s portraits and numerous subject pictures take on a striking coherence, complementing one another and revealing the breadth and unity of his artistic production. Throughout his career, Sully continued to paint leading actors of the day—both in and out of character.

Bob Kuhn: Drawing on Instinct
March 15, 2014 – June 8, 2014

This wonderful exhibition is inspired by Kuhn’s devotion to the practice of drawing. Masterpieces of observation, design and invention, Kuhn’s drawings were integral to his art—the building blocks upon which his paintings were constructed. Born in Buffalo, New York, Kuhn (1920–2007) began his observations of animals in the Buffalo Zoo and studied at New York City’s Pratt Institute. His detailed paintings of animals in landscape eventually made him one of America’s most popular wildlife illustrators.
Youth Poems

Sweat
James Strevey

Sweat is the ultimate motivator.
Sweat pushes us to the fore.
Sweat built this nation
And defends it to the end.
But yet, at the end of the day we wipe it off.
Sweat keeps us going.
Sweat keeps us flowing.
Sweat gives us limits
And we try to go above them.
But yet, at the end of the day we wipe it off.
Sweat is almighty power.
Sweat makes others cower.
Sweat is our foundation
And without it we fall.
But yet, at the end of the day we wipe it off.

So why do we wipe it off?
The liquid of achievement
The potion that saves us from heat and drought,
that gives us power and control.
Because we know it will be there again tomorrow.

Disoriented Memorandum #1
Darian Stahl
St. Anthony Catholic High School

The sparrows have their 5:30 ritual every morning.
This is my second time hearing them,
I need not see them.

The air tastes different around this time:
A crisp, cold slap for a change.

For this brief moment, the pests don’t have to hide,
a Chilean apple becomes a vacuum for post-noon bothers,
and a passing phrase from a sleepy spirit makes its impression.

Dawn; its early dews, its deeper blues.
Truly the Sun’s Western Hangover.

And as for me, meditation incognito, the experience ideal
has allowed me the rare opportunity
to again feel clean and sharply pristine.

Disoriented Memorandum #2
Darian Stahl
St. Anthony Catholic High School

What have we learned?

The boundaries are key,
Doors can be opened and never shut,
the restraints of Time can only compress memories.

And still,
the lines can be bent.
The unbelievable patterns of Nature.

The warmth of sensation is the same
as the sensation of warmth.

The seduction of spirit unconsciously extracts the Sacred. Accept each shake. There is no reason not to feel Euphoric.

Sorry, Madre mía
Alfredo M.

Madre mía, sorry for all my desmadre
that I did to hurt you, Jefita. Yo sé
que I made you cry for my crazy things.
Madre mía, yo sé que te
preocupas por mi.

All the good things that you told me,
it was good for me.
Pero nunca te escuché when I made you cry.
Me siento mal.
Thank you for having me en esta vida.

Te prometo that I’m going to change for good.
My crazy life is over.
Quiero estar contigo,
give you the time that I was not there for you.
**Pandora’s X-box**  
*Alexis Haight*

All day, all day her brother and his friends played that X-box.

They manipulated knights questing to save their lady-loves,

shot a WWII soldier’s rifle to stop the Nazis.

Her mousy brother, a noble hero— in virtual reality.

He finished each level with proclamations of awesome! super!

But he didn’t have a job, skipped school every other day.

Her brother still blames Pandora’s innocent curiosity.

Her desire, to see the graphics. But she’d ripped open the box on purpose. Cut the wires so her brother would have hope.

---

**The Pawn**  
*Ian Kearney*  
*Keystone School*

The pawn  
A lowly piece  
Some people think.  
But I say  
Why did Fischer win?  
Maybe because of a pawn.  
Others say  
That they are pawns themselves,  
Lowly,  
Ignored,  
Useless.

But I say to those hallowed few,  
In chess, only a fool  
Would give away his pawn,  
Would lose the match.  
In the right hands,  
Guided by a master,  
The pawn can be vital,  
The pawn can be successful,  
The pawn can be the finisher,  
The pawn will end the match.  
In a game of chess,  
The pawn should not be ignored.  
So when you are low  
Or feeling like a fool,  
Just remember these words:

The pawn can turn into a queen, a righteous piece.  
The pawn, if guided well, will always win the match.  
Hang in there and you will make it through and be the hero, too.

---

**Salt Shaker**  
*April Ponce*  
*Krueger Middle School*

If I could be anything,  
What would I be?  
Maybe a salt shaker.  
Filled with glee?  
Standing right next to my love,  
Mr. Pepper?  
I’d be stuck to him forever and ever,  
With different personalities every time he is refilled.  
I would have a strong and weird thing about me.  
People would love me like this,  
But would hate me if I was a little too much.  
Sitting there watching people chat  
What would I be?  
Probably just THAT!
Select Poems

Kind of Purple
Rebecca Balcárcel

Tonight, as the sun struts west, let’s walk
through evening’s purple hour into the pleats
of night’s gown. Let’s slide down her silk breezes,
unfurl through a Miles Davis solo,
hear red tones steam as they meet blue cool,
pouring purple through our spines
until the final note leaves silence vibrating.
Let’s become the thrum inside violet silence.
Come sit, and while night smooths our foreheads,
let’s drink joy, drop knots, spin love
out from our bodies, set the glow flowing over the grass,
charming every cricket into chirping, every cluster of
posturing park bench
teens into looking each other in the eye,
every woman, weary with the day’s lines and boxes, into curving,
every stooped man into straightening.
Let’s send this purple tumbling across fields,
gusting from town to town, continent to continent, to touch
even the droughted life, the torn skin, the iron hatreds.
Let it lap every surface; erode everything rock-bound.
Let us find all the ways to unfold to each other,
simple buckets overrunning.

A Poem
Mark Hierholzer

The silent man sat
On the edge of the fire pit
Smoking a fine cigar, a gift,
One fit for a senator he thought
The orange-burn embellished
The long ash end.
He looked up at the dark branches
Late in summer, the stars
Ornamented the bunched leaves.

He walked now, pacing each
Chunk of time with his feet
On his way to the street. The burnt end
Fell to the ground in one piece.
He stooped to feel the thick, burnt trunk
And it fell apart gently in his fingers
To dust to the earth.
This was me he thought. Time has passed.
I am all gone. For an instant
The edge of the metal gate shone
Like a small phantom.

The night returned to him
As an embellishment of the stroking hours
As distant chimes sounded.

I’m a Word, Just Like Everybody Else
Carlos Ponce Melendez

I’m a word
All my life, all my beliefs are squeezed in a simple sound, a plain word:

“‘I’”
I have always been “I”
I have experienced millions of things but I’m still “I” as when I was a second old.
And when I say “I”
“‘I’” means all the things I carry within me;
My soul, my doubts, my fears, my culture, my time.

“‘I’” even represents the things that I don’t know
Like who am I? Why am I here? What’s after I die?
But when I say “I,” I also represents you
And everybody in the world.
Six-and-a-half billion of you are “I” too.

Every “I” has different experiences, language, age
But all of them use “I” when they tell their stories,
Ask for food or make love.

Some “I” died today and some died a long time ago
But they were “I” also. Many more will come and live in a different world
But they will be “I” as the first one, as your “I” as my “I.”

What a responsibility to say “I.”

Excerpt from A Winter’s Tale, Act 4, Scene 3
William Shakespeare

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o’ the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter’s pale.
The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!
Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.
The lark, that tirra-lyra chants,
With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
While we lie tumbling in the hay.
I have served Prince Florizel and in my time
wore three-pile; but now I am out of service:
But shall I go mourn for that, my dear?
The pale moon shines by night:
And when I wander here and there,
I then do most go right.
If tinkers may have leave to live,
And bear the sow-skin budget,
Then my account I well may, give,
And in the stocks avouch it.
No One Else To Say It
Jerry Bradley

Because there is no one else to say it,
my barber tells me
that love will wreck our lives.

Never give more
than they can use he says,
and he might know:
thickset like a wrestler
and muscular as a starfish,
he looks strong enough
to ride muleback over the Andes.

He is without hair himself,
skin the color of a wild carrot,
but I am in the pulpit
of a man who’s had
his heart cut out
and survived the strike.

You wouldn’t order a meal
on the recommendation
of a skinny waitress, would you?
In the mirror I try to follow
his muffled alphabet,
the paths his clippers take.

Then he tells me again
how he’s beaten the odds,
love and heart disease.
So I listen when he says to bet
heavy on Big Roger in the fifth.

---

Van Gogh’s Potato Eater at Home
Charlotte Renk

You’ve seen him, the old potato eater
at the end of the day, the way labor
leans in, and he’s too tired to talk.
He’s so full of emptiness
that thinking, much less saying
anything is unthinkable.

Past his silent slump into the chair,
the only thing that matters then
is the earthy smell of the white pulp
beneath the shriveled brown cover—
that slit of the knife into soft warmth
offering no resistance.

Then a few shakes of salt and pepper,
the lifting and lowering of rough knuckles
from plate to mouth, mouth to plate,
wiping occasional bits of pulp from his lips
with the back of his hand. He waits
for the fullness in the belly to come.

Maybe then, he can smile at the hand
that baked and handed him the potato.
And then again,
maybe not.

---

Bloody Hands in the Market
Carmen Trujillo

Bold face tag says “Unique, Handmade, Diverse”
But my mind knows that authenticity is bloodied
By the cellophane packaging and tiny sticker price

Elderly men and women search for their discounts
Which is more than those who make the product earn
Blood and sweat are in the essence of the handmade product

I wipe my bloodstained hands on the edge of my apron
Pray to whatever spiritual entity of that week
To forgive me for the insolent attitudes of others

We live on the backs of the unmentioned
So many of us have willingly forgotten
And I don’t know if I can wipe blood away
Hasta la Madre
Victoria García-Zapata Klein
para Javier Sicilia

“No puedo escribir más poesía…
La poesía ya no existe en mí”

Poetry’s no longer in you
you say
so I write for you
about the atrocities
we are responsible for

70,000 lives lost
and counting

the loss of Juan Francisco,
your son

your pain
I do not know
can only imagine

Imagine peace
hasta la madre

I hear Tía Soni’s
Y mi Tía Carmela’s
Stories
de Nuevo Laredo
stories of bodies
strung up, lynched
for all to see
Tía brings us the local paper
as proof of the horror

two months later
the tías return
and tell of
bodies being burned
alive
so close all can
hear the screams
as they perish
in a blaze of
the worst kind of violence

This war on drugs
es puro pedo
so full of shit
filled with holes
big as
U.S. arms shipped to Mexico
big as
insurmountable drugs
flowing into the States

“All along this border we share
We share death, destruction
damned blood shed in vain
innocent blood shed, we disdain

veins take in the toxins
taking loads of lives

lives lost
fleeting as a
hummingbird
scared off

as we try to touch
the untouchable
peace
we seek in despair
yet with hope

hope for change
in laws
that they might
legalize
what comes from the Earth
sweet maryjane
simply soothes

hundreds of thousands
of lives transformed
de-criminalized
taking off the edge
on this God-forsaken
“War on Drugs”
Cartels
will lose some power
every bit
they lose means
lives spared

70,000
and counting

We cannot allow
this injustice to prevail

Javier, we cannot
lose your poetry
which serves
to save lives
by line
by line
by line
Editors’ Poems

La Lechuza
Gerard S. Robledo

I see your white face
behind uncertain woods: a specter
vanishing with my childhood
as my daughter ages—the endangered species
of the Borderland. The old people
curse at you, shooing you away
with every expletive. I beg you to stay,
“Vuelve mi querido!” My child
and I have left you
horchata y biscochitos.

Gettysburg
Joan Strauch Seifert

We noticed, in the windows of the town,
lit candles in the evenings—homes all up and down
had one, even now, toward the millennium.
Loyal, this remembrance—how far it’s come.

(But what for?
Will candles slow the savagery of war?)

A remembrance of souls long gone,
their glow weaves itself into the oxygen of life
in hope the constancy would banish strife.

“A good gesture it does seem, a public plan”
to show, they say, “the great regret of man
when lives go out too soon—we won’t forget!”
A candle burns to fete each one—and yet …

In Gettysburg, the memory’s alive—they want it to be so,
and “if it takes four score and a thousand years,
let candles burn, to prove our land endures.”

Pace of Modernity
Mo H Saidi

He drops the pen, shakes his
Numb hand, looks at the penultimate line
In the “Lady with Lapdog”
The difficult ending. Chest pain.

He wonders whether love alone
Can alleviate his consuming cough.
Like a turtle, modernity crawls
On the road with the theriac.

Decades to go on the bumpy path.
He tends to a soldier’s injured leg,
Stirs a tincture for a broken heart
Escorts a wounded man to the door.

Alas, an insatiable longing for fresh air.
He falls across the threshold.
Long before Schatz’s discovery
Woe to the slow pace of modernity!

Hard Freeze
Carol Coffee Reposa

It’s winter, and I think of sleeping animals.
Even the sky is hibernating now,
A shaggy shape
That feels the growing distance of the sun
And crawls into a cave
Of cold,
Rolls into a knot of blackened clouds.

He tugs at the city lights,
Pulls threads of red and white
From icy streets
To warm his darkened walls.

He coils their brightness
Through his claws,
Holds their colors to his crusted eyes
And lines the sleeping stones
With tufts of fog,
Waiting for those days that glitter sharply
Like an eager hunter’s knife.

From The Green Room
Poemas Internacionales

Me Estoy Riendo
César Vallejo

Un guijarro, uno solo, el más bajo de todos,
Controla
A todo el médano aciago y faraónico.

El aire adquiere tension de recuerdo y anhelo,
y bajo el sol se calla
hasta exigir el cuello a las pirámides.

Sed. Hidratada melancolía de la tribu errabunda,
gota
da
gota,
del siglo al minuto.

Son tres Treses paralelos,
Barbados de barba inmemorial,
en marcha 3 3 3

Es el tiempo este anuncio de gran zapatería,
es el tiempo, que marcha descalzo
de la muerte hacia la muerte.

En Horas de Tristeza
María Cruz

Mi corazón es roca solitaria
Perdida en alta mar…
Tumultuosas oleadas de recuerdos
La azotan sin cesar…

Tumultuosas oleadas de recuerdos
¡La azotan sin cesar!…
La carcomen, la cavan y la agrietan
Y al fin la han de arrasar…

Y nada quedará de aquella roca
¡Perdida en alta mar!…
Pero entonces podré de la tortura
¡Acaso descansar!

International Poems

I Am Laughing
César Vallejo / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

A single stone, lowly, beneath all others
controls
the entirety of the tragic Pharaonic dune.

Its air becomes tense with memory and desire,
and beneath the sun it is silent,
it demands the throat of the pyramids.

Thirst. Hydrated melancholy of the wandering tribe,
from drop
to
drop,
the century meets the minute.

Those Three are parallels,
bearded men from ancient beards,
marching 3 3 3

It is time to announce the great cobbler,
the time is now, for marching barefoot
from death to death.

In Times of Sadness
María Cruz / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

My heart is a solitary rock
Lost at high sea…
Tumultuous waves of memories,
Ceaselessly scour…

Memories, tumultuous waves
They rage on!…
With every crash it cracks, it erodes
And finally, a landslide…

Bit by bit these waves crack, crush, and wear away,
And in the end they have destroyed my rock!
And nothing will remain
Lost at high sea…

Nothing will remain of that rock
Lost at high sea!…
But, maybe, then I can finally rest
from the torture!
Drei Gedichte
Hejo Müller

Burgundische Eva

Meine Herkunft
bist du
ein Stück
und meiner Zukunft

(für Giselbertus)

In meinen Nächten

In meinen Nächten
suche ich Nähe

zu dir

und finde
nur Ferne

Und Wind Weht

Und Wärme
der durchglühten Nächte
liegt wie ein Glanz
auf unserer Haut

Da steht der Mond
Und Sterne brechen.

Und Wind weht.
Und Wolken und Wind.

Three Poems
Hejo Müller / translated by James Brandenburg

Burgundian Eve

Of my past
you are
a part
and
a part
of my future.

(For Giselbertus)

Nights

Nights
I seek closeness
to you

but find
only coldness

And Wind Blows

And the warmth
of nights aglow
lies like a sheen
on our skin

The moon hangs in the sky
And stars refract

And wind blows
And clouds and wind.
Select Poems

Winter Dreams
Harold Rodinsky

I
leaves falling everywhere
greens turning reds gold brown
northeast-wind bringing a bone-chilling feel to the air
memories of winters up the north
snowing by late November
dustings first then winter’s wrath
wind-piled snow to the eves of the house
standing back to the wind there was only snow to see
the perfect sledding course

II
leaves falling everywhere
greens turning dried out crackly brown
northwest-wind bringing a slight biting to the evening air
dreams of snow and cold are doomed
open the windows birds roam the sky
sun rise wind dies down air is warmed
wind-piled leaves against the fence
drought continues rivers dry
no winter coming no rain dance

Mooning Around
Chuck Taylor

A man on the radio says that I should sing to the Moon, that it is to my advantage to craft a song, to go out at night and search the sky and if I find the Moon sing my tune to the Moon. The man on the radio gives no advice what I should do if a neighbor should be walking a dog and catches me at the curb lifting an arm out from my chest in the airy midst of song. I might be singing, O Moon,
do you know you rhyme with Lune—or Only a goon would sing such a jejune tune, or O spoon of night, you make the grass swoon.

By singing to the Moon, the man on the radio says I will enjoy more wealth, more health, a longer life, and more happiness. I rate myself worthy and willing to take all or any of these gifts, be they from the Moon or from Fortuna, and I do love the Moon and do like the idea of singing to the Moon. The Moon needs its own church choir. It no doubt misses the bands it heard from gazebos in city parks a century ago. The Moon speaks to us, speaks loud and speaks clear—we just don’t know what a celestial body says—and I think it may be better that way. I already know more than I want to know—that a huge asteroid recently passed between the Moon and Earth, that the Moon looks smaller than when I was a little kid. Poor Moon, sliding each day away a little further, like the stars, shying away from our gaze into a darker and emptier place. I do believe the wolves are howling now for a reason, beyond and including mating. Lonely old balloon, my moon, sail away with blessings as you search for tunes out there, somewhere, some place in space with a welcoming song of vacuum space.

And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time
William Blake

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England’s mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England’s pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England’s green and pleasant land.
New York, 2008
Clark Watts

lub dub lub dub
so beats her heart
the scenes of life
so vibrant here

remember when
We four were there
buildings stretching
ice skates gliding
horses prancing
rickshaws waiting

saxes wailing,
the mournful blues
dogs on leashes
goggers jogging
shoppers bustling
crowds are seamless

horns are blaring,
as traffic stalls
street food beckons
all night bagels
taxis dashing
neons flashing

it does not cease,
this timeless scene

(four syllables per line,
as the beat of the NY heart)

Grandma and Me
Janet E. Cosner

Most summer afternoons, I helped my grandma,
sounds of our German neighborhood drifting in the window,
children playing on swept sidewalks,
sprinklers hissing on the well-kept lawns.
As the sun cracked up, we made recipes
found in her handmade recipe book.
We prepared simple meals on her gas altar,
pork chops, stew, and Swiss steak,
mashed potatoes with real potatoes covered in lard gravy,
a side of sour sauerkraut,
rolls that puffed up like turtle backs in the oven,
For dessert no “kuchen” or apple turnovers,
a Hawaiian dream cake or strawberry angel cake,
American desserts found in Better Homes & Gardens.

On the back of the torn recipes her greasy thumbprint,
ads for Green Spot Orange Drink,
checkered polyester suits, the latest fad,
the Crosley refrigerator with new roll-out crisper,
pork butt roasts for 39 cents a pound,
an essay on the Soviet Union and Khrushchev,
an article about childbirth pain
being a result of ignorance of the birth process,
and advice on how to talk about sex with your child.

Three families sat around
the formica-topped table,
our faces like dinner plates,
five cousins, two aunts, and one uncle,
Grandma wearing a clean pressed apron,
Grandpa at the head of the table.
We nodded our heads as punctuation
to each other’s happy voices.
A snapshot of a time when
everything seemed simple.

Spirit of Death
James Kraus

Land blows with a passing breeze
My trees shake their leaves
Spirit floats above, departing
Gentle arms of grass
Shake off its breath.

Body lays itself down
Grasp fails
Earth arms
Catch falling shell
Stooping, surrounding
One that cares no more

Years fall away
Tears no longer weigh
On heart that beats no more

Stars look down and wonder.
All is grieving, lights cease
Insentient, cold,
Numb mind knows no more

Silence.

Time spills over rim of space
Embalmimg in forgetfulness
‘Til all wounds are healed
And with new stars
Life may spring once again.

Lay quiet now
As I caress you
‘Tis night now
Sleep.

Voices de la Luna, 15 January 2014
The First Snowfall
James Russell Lowell

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
Came Chanticleer’s muffled crow,
The stiff rails were softened to swan’s-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn
Where a little headstone stood;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, “Father, who makes it snow?”
And I told of the good All-father
Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o’er our first great sorrow,
When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud-like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar of our deep-plunged woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
“The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
Alone can make it fall!”

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;
And she, kissing back, could not know
That my kiss was given to her sister,
Folded close under deepening snow.

Declarations
On a Sunday Evening …
Catherine-Grace Patrick
For Henry’s & Sheila’s 58 years of wedded bliss

With the blaze of ten thousand suns,
this heart adores you.

In the pianissimo of dawn,
I breathe your name.

Your vibrant shades of Spring intoxicate.
To the Song of the Earth, my soul pours out
these tears of deathless bliss.

By the shadow of the moon,
I caress your sweet perfection;
It is to you that my passions murmur—
even when the scordatura echoes distance.

And could I love you more
than God, Himself does— that I’d do;
for no mortal more perfectly worships
than this heart of mine loves you.

From *Hymns of the Mahlerian Fire*, by Catherine-Grace Patrick

Happy Holler
(a neighborhood in Knoxville, Tennessee)
Rachel Jennings

at that moment   out of the blue
life happens   cause, buddy,
I tell you what   an angel, bright-

faced, at the door   the rustle
of startled doves   a black Chevy
with scabbard fins   a garden gnome
in a porch swing   a rooster crowing
in a rusty cage   a soaring Cross
like Jack’s beanstalk   laughing carolers
in faded cutoffs   sunflowers
tall in a vacant lot   your back
to the shadows   a colorful picture
post card   something, huh?
continued from page 10 ...

The Fantasticks are scheduled for Feb. 6 – Mar. 2 and May 8 – June 8, respectively. (See www.vexler.org.)

At least three other companies should be mentioned: the Cameo Theater in St. Paul Square, another historic place now known for very eclectic and popular programming (www.cameocenter.com); the fun and youthful Overtime Theater, which presents only original scripts (www.overtimetheater.org); and the Jump-Start Performance Co., which has been staging and presenting new performance works since 1986 (www.jump-start.org). The latter is also moving into a new space, displaced by the changes in the Blue Star Arts Complex. Over the years, Jump-Start has nurtured many creative artists, from playwrights and directors to performance artists, videographers, and multidisciplinary stage performers.

San Antonio is also lucky to have a professional children’s theater, The Magik, housed in yet another significant structure, the old Beethoven Hall in HemisFair Park. Four shows are planned from January through August, including the world premiere of Skippyjon Jones, based on the book by Judy Schachner about a hyperactive kitten (www.magiktheatre.org). In addition, educational thespian programs for youth are offered by a number of companies, including the Playhouse, the Woodlawn, and Jump-Start.

This is by no means an exhaustive survey of theatrical activity in the city. At least three local universities boast theater departments that mount shows during the school year—often of high quality—and there are several smaller groups that also do good work, though more sporadically. There’s so much going on that San Antonio has its own version of the Tonys—the Alamo Theater Arts Council Globe Awards—which recognizes achievement in various disciplines, from acting to lighting design (www.atacsa.org). Presented every fall, the awards show is a great opportunity to see excerpts from nominated productions and mingle with a talented crowd.

Jasmina Wellinghoff, Ph.D., has been reviewing and writing about the arts in San Antonio for more than twenty-five years. She was the theater critic for the San Antonio Light and is currently the dance reviewer for the Express-News. She was also the founding president of the Alamo Theater Arts Council Globe Awards—which recognizes achievement in various disciplines, from acting to lighting design (www.atacsa.org). Presented every fall, the awards show is a great opportunity to see excerpts from nominated productions and mingle with a talented crowd.

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.

Untitled
Marisol Macías
Selene is fleeting
her fingers prancing across her charcoal lake
silver water lilies twinkling,
floating and twirling ladies in waiting
wrapping her shawl; a twilight mist
before turning to dew when dawn approaches

High Love
Andrea Hackler
You took me places in my mind that I never really knew.
You gave me what I wanted even when you left me black and blue.
You broke my soul and heart into little bits and pieces
Laughing wholeheartedly while I was nothing more than shard
of meth on the ground
Which I knew were more valuable to you than me.
Didn’t you know baby, I loved you highly and never truly
But that’s what high love does to
A dope fiend like me.

Dual Personality
Alicia Clifford
At 14 I went from Alicia to Ali
I left home and started life on my own
At 17 I went from Ali to Ashlee when
I met my first husband
I changed my name to change who
I was to become. To leave behind the
old me and become a new me
It was freeing each time
Now I’m 40 and not too sure who I am
Though I know me.
Each person I was is a poet I see.
Who will I become now, who will I be?
I’ve grown so much in so many ways
discovering and exploring all avenues each day.
Alicia, Ali, Ashlee—what would happen
If I combined all 3
Is who I am, who I’ll be?
Journey
Amanda Hernandez

In the end,
the journey is my own.
You can hold my hand for a ways
if you’d like.
We can stop and
rest together.
But your path is coming up soon—
another mile up
and you’ll be gone.
Let me kiss your forehead,
send you off.
You’ll find a hand to hold on your next leg—
more than a few, I’m sure.

Just remember your journey
is your own
and no matter how many hands you hold,
you’ll always have to let go.
And that’s okay.

That’s when the fun begins.

One Day at a Time
Darrell Morgan

One day at a time
Never go too fast
Living on a dime
You’re going to crash
Giving yourself nothing but pain
Of course, you’ll be all right
Didn’t realize you’re going insane
Kidding no one, looking to fight
Now lying here in white
Only with the Bible to read
Washing away memories every night
Searching for the one you need

Where can you find him
Here in this place
You look in the mirror, and you see his face.

Fireflies
Christina Rodriguez

Be a light…
Shine bright…
Give them sight…
Help them take flight…
So they can be a light…
And shine bright…
And give someone else sight…
So that person can take flight…
Then so on and so on…
Until we’re all like little fireflies glowing in the night.

Untitled
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.

When I Feel the Stress in This USA
Janie Alonso

Work
Lay offs
Illness
Surgery
The threat of nuclear war
a false sense of security
Aging
Feeling not needed
Useless when there is so much wisdom
The chance of memory loss
Dealing with changes,
loss of loved ones
Our own mortality
How will our children survive without us?
It seems the years have flown by
Have I done what I was put on earth to do?
It is too much stress

I return to childhood days
Rural memories
Boundless green pastures
Bright yellow sunny days
Blue unthreatening skies
Flowing clean rivers
Cool ponds
Safe sanctuary
natural bliss
Free from worries
Stress can wait
For the moment
The Opening of the Door
Shane Potter

My life has had its challenges, some have been large and some have been small. But what has overwhelmed these challenges is the courage to face them all. There were times I thought these challenges would limit what I could do. But as time has passed along, I no longer find this true. At times I felt so empty, and that no one would understand. When all I needed to do was reach out and open my hand.

When I finally opened my hand, the result was people who actually cared. When a challenge arises that I think I cannot face, these people are always there. They remind me of how far I’ve come and let me know how far I can go. They also tell me that if I never try, the results will never show. I no longer have to feel lost and live by these horrible limitations. I can now break free of the chains and start building on my foundation.

Now I look forward to the future and all the possibilities that it brings. I discover I have the ability to accomplish all these things. I know life won’t be perfect and that challenges will remain. But I have displayed that I am able to deal with all the pain. As I embark upon a journey with more openings than I can see, I know the only person that can limit that lengthy journey is me.

I can say that I’m starting to be proud of who I’ve become today. I will no longer let anything try and stand in my way. I will make it to the top, no matter how much effort or time it takes. And while I’m on my way up, I will never apply the brakes. I used to feel real weak in life, but I’m beginning to feel so strong. Never has it felt so right to prove myself so wrong.

Mommy Please
Ashley Ayers

Dear Mommy; I’m in a better place way up in the sky
And I’ve got a job as a Jr. Angel
So… Mommy please don’t cry

Guess what Mommy? I sat in Jesus’s lap today,
And for your comfort He helped me pray for you to be OK
Just for today, And Mommy the food
Uncle Jeff and Mamaw make here is divine
I’m living fine

I’ll be sure to send you baby kisses of my love.
To give your heart a heaven-sent hug; and my tiny fingers your tears to dry;

So for today; One day at a time
Mommy please don’t cry.

Feelings
Linda Garcia

I feel alone and sad
I feel like no one understands
I feel like I want to die
I feel there’s no hope for me

I want to stop feeling this way
I don’t need no one’s pity
I just want to understand why I feel this way.

I hate feeling this way
I hate thinking this way

If there is a God
Please take these thoughts and feelings
Away from me

Purification
Khalilah Bilal

Fading
Making room for sacred
A New Jerusalem
No longer needing pampers

Procrastination
A place where silver rusts

New life means
Another death is promised

What good is a parachute that doesn’t open
Liberate from unanimated objectivity

Be ready to fly
If you have to
Paper tigers don’t even meow

Self Portrait
Peter Holland

There I am, product of
an almost forgotten past.
Words became my haven,
my garden I tend,
making joy
out of simple thought,
a wordsmith
banging out ideas,
crafting emotions
with simple verse,
making wonderworks
out of a simple human mind.
Poetry & Dreams
Poetry, Dreams, and Interpretation

The Dance
Transcribed and Interpreted by James Brandenburg
San Antonio, TX
Dec. 3, 2011

Dream: The dream takes place a few hundred years ago in an American Indian community. There are teepees around us, and the Indians are dressed in their traditional clothing. Paintings of nature decorate the teepees, and there is a fire in the middle, stoked by wood and leaves. The Indians are doing a traditional dance around the fire—dancing in a circular pattern. Someone is playing drums, but I can’t determine where the sounds are coming from. It is an ancient and penetrating beat. I join in the dance; I sense the beat in my feet and legs and in the core of my being. I dance with the Indians in a circle. I feel at home here, as if this is where I belong. I feel connected. End of dream.

Comment: I went dancing with Maria last night. We went to the restaurant Antigua, where there was a Puerto Rican band. There were several drummers, and the music was island music. It was easy to feel the rhythm in our feet and toes. Indeed, the trigger for the dream is obvious. In the dream, I am totally in sync with the ancient rhythms. Through the ancient rhythms, I am getting in touch with some archetypal dimensions. There is something deep in the psyche that is being energized—both in my outer life and also in the dream. I feel that by connecting to Maria through dance, I am connecting to a spiritual dance in my psyche. The outer life and the inner life are in sync. I have achieved a balance in my life, both in my marriage and in my individuation process.

Death: Dance of the Psyche
James Brandenburg

Do not fear the passing of this body for fire
chases out the woman as she ascends into the clouds
then pours herself onto smoldering ashes and like rain to earth
returns again to the body a sacred marriage of wisdom and decay
growth swaths the vestiges a rose of a hundred petals
riots in all her glory

The Ghost Dance

The Ghost Dance was a Native American religious movement inaugurated in 1890 by the Paiute spiritual leader Wovoka (pictured), also known as Jack Wilson. He modeled the ghost dance on the traditional circle dance, proclaiming that proper performance of the dance would unite the tribes with one another, and the living with the dead. Anthropologist James Mooney translated many of the lyrics of individual tribal songs that accompanied the dance as it was performed following the death of Sitting Bull during the Wounded Knee massacre. The following are excerpts of Ghost Dance lyrics from three tribes. For more information, see www.ghostdance.com.

Caddo
Our father dwells above,
Our mother dwells below.
All our people are going up,
Above to where the father dwells,
Above to where our people live.

Kiowa
The father will descend,
The earth will tremble,
Everybody will arise,
Stretch out your hands.
The spirit army is approaching,
The whole world is moving onward.
See! Everybody is standing watching,
Let us all pray.

Sioux
I love my children—Ye’ye’!
You shall grow to be a nation—Ye’ye’!
Says the father, says the father.
I sit here and ponder.
I sit here and contemplate.
I sit here and wonder.
I sit here full of heartache.
I lay down full of worries
and I wake full of dreading.
Time is the only constant
for it keeps moving on
not caring or worrying
what tomorrow brings.
When will my thoughts stop?
When will my heart mend?
The truth is no one really knows
and I am yet to be whole again.

Nautica skims over the cobalt sea
Barcelona to the walled island, Malta
Transported to 5000 BCE
Led by carved, voluptuous women
Guides to cobbled paths laid by ancient slaves
Higher then deeper to another epoch
My feet on the path backward
Through thousands of years of wars
Then abrupt magnificent modern ports
Whoever controls Malta rules the Med

Again Nautica over the cobalt sea
to Angihios Nicolaos, Crete
Island of the ancient Minoans
Ambling through the Palace of Gnosis
Where spiral symbols cover ancient stones
Following new paths to
Greek chapels housing legendary icons
Bougainville trellises cover village paths
Outdoor ovens wafting tempting aromas
Calling me to delicacies unknown
Fabulous vistas bear me
To Nautica, magic carpet over the cobalt sea
The story begins ordinarily enough for a book of this genre. A young man wishes to be someone, anyone other than who he is, and he is suddenly granted his wish. Twenty-something professor Eric Behrens has been discovered in a relationship with one of his students. Disgraced and fired from his job (the student is the daughter of the chair of the board of trustees, never a good move), Behrens utters the fateful words, “Damn them all! Damn the whole world! Satan, take them to Hell and take me, too—just make me into someone else! I’d give anything, even my soul, to be somebody else!” And just like that he gets his wish. But at this point the ordinary body-swapping plot becomes anything but ordinary.

Behrens falls and hits his head, and he finds that his soul now inhabits the body of an overweight, sick, middle-aged monk named Anselm. Anselm, it turns out, has been plotting for awhile to trade bodies with a younger man, having discovered a secret spell in the medieval Latin manuscripts in which he was an expert. Transported back to the monastery, Behrens (in Ambrose’s body) is accused of trying to seduce ... himself! Meanwhile, Ambrose (in Behrens’ body) is free to resume his affair with the trustee’s daughter.

Can Behrens find a way to reverse the body-swap before his new (old) body gives out from a heart defect he has inherited? Can he locate Ambrose and his real body and force him to reverse the spell? Will anyone—his parents? his best friend?—believe such a hare-brained story that is now his reality, his living nightmare?

Underlying the story is an exploration of the mind-body problem, most famously associated with René Descartes, but explored in depth by other philosophers and theologians as well. Behrens remembers a quote from Pascal, “The heart has its reasons that reason knows not.” Are body and mind really separable?

The story starts simply enough and true enough to form, but its deviations into both modern and medieval philosophy and theology invite the reader along on an enjoyable ride that defies expectations. Do you think you know how the book ends? Don’t count on it!

Florence Weinberg, a medieval scholar and award-winning author, taught for twenty-two years at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY, and for ten years at Trinity University in San Antonio.

Doris Lessing (1919-2013)

Doris Lessing (née Tayler) was born in Persia (now Iran) to British parents in 1919, and in 1925 the family moved to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Although her formal education ended at the age of thirteen, she went on to educate herself, publishing her first stories while still a teen. By 1949 she was in London, and in that year she published her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, beginning her career as a professional writer. Many of her early works were set in southern Africa and decried colonialism and racial inequality. Her later works often featured strong, forceful female characters. From the 1960s she was drawn to Sufi mysticism, focusing on the correlation between an individual’s fate and the fate of society.

Her novels include the *Children of Violence* series, *The Golden Notebook*, *The Good Terrorist*, *The Fifth Child*, and *Alfred and Emily*. In 2007 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In her Nobel acceptance speech, she said, Writers are often asked, How do you write? With a processor? an electric typewriter? a quill? longhand? But the essential question is, “Have you found a space, that empty space, which should surround you when you write?” Into that space, which is like a form of listening, of attention, will come the words, the words your characters will speak, ideas, inspiration.
Last summer, while preparing a talk on political poetry, I realized that even before I could approach the subject, I faced several important questions. And so my talk became titled, “The Questions of Political Poetry.” I’m developing this talk into an extended essay; but here, briefly, are some of the questions that arise as I consider political poetry in the United States.

In recent years I have observed a steady cry for poets to write political poetry. But what is political poetry? The cry for political poetry is bound up with a cry for “public” poetry; and I suppose we might consider “political,” in its root sense of the polis, or city-state, to mean “public.” In other words, it’s a matter of audience, too. But it’s also a matter of subject: the cry for political poetry also seems to mean poetry engaged in the political process itself: pointing out injustice, propelling the arguments. This notion of poetry as action harkens to Shelley’s famous claim, at the end of “A Defense of Poetry,” that “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” Shelley’s lofty, romantic assertion continues to hold currency—just note Mark Edmundson’s article in Harper’s last July, which concludes by citing, unironically, this very statement of Shelley’s. (I guess Edmundson missed the irony that Harper’s, while happy to publish his call for public poetry, refuses to publish poems.)

According to the critics, however, this ostensible lack of political poetry is entirely the poets’ fault. David Orr complains in Poetry magazine (April 2011) that poets only write for an audience of other poets. (Of course, Orr writes this complaint in a magazine called “Poetry.”) This complaint is a common one. A history professor once told me that poetry writing shouldn’t be taught in universities, because it teaches poets to write only for other poets. Really now? And I suppose history professors aren’t writing for other history professors? Let’s understand that poetry is an art; it is a discipline: as such, its practice will inevitably be to some degree self-reflexive. The traditions of poetry span millennia and cultures: poetry is an ongoing conversation across periods and places. A large portion of poetry’s public or political relevance is due to this very quality. A responsible poet can, and should, acknowledge that conversation even as she directs the poem’s main energy outside that conversation. It doesn’t mean she’s writing only for other poets.

David Biespiel, also in Poetry (May 2010), takes the call for political poetry a step further, calling for poets to actually become legislators and administrators—to enter the political arena. He seems to think that being a poet somehow intrinsically qualifies you for effective public leadership; though why a poet should be more effective—or less susceptible to greed, ineptitude, or cronyism—than any other class of persons is never articulated. All these arguments are simplified generalizations marshaled against straw poets; they are the kind of writing that good poems inherently—and politically, I’d say—resist.

So what would a contemporary American political poem look like? Dana Gioia argues, as does Edmundson, for a poetry that speaks with a communal rather than individual style: “Sometimes great poetry is not conspicuously individual, original, or complex,” writes Gioia in Disappearing Ink, “but communal, familiar, and direct.” Gioia cites the public role that Auden’s “September 1939” took on after the events of 9/11. But in doing so, he quotes the opening and closing of the poem, and omits the middle bulk of the poem—which is, in fact, highly individualized, complex, and obscure. Other poets, of the postmodern camp, would attack the very sort of poetry commended by Gioia or Edmundson as being the worst sort of political poetry: that this communal voice is a creation of, and thus complicit in, ideological forces of repression. Some of the deliberately postmodernist, experimental poets call for, and practice, a poetry of disruption, employing techniques that “interrogate” the conventions of a coherent voice, discourse, or referentiality in poetry. (I put “interrogate” in scare quotes because I simply cannot take the word seriously when used by critics in this context.)

I think the political peculiarities of the United States call for a particular kind of political poem. When we think of a political poetry, our first thought might be of poetry produced out of, in defiance of, or in witness to, strife and oppression: what Carolyn Forché, in her introduction to Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness, calls “extremity.” But does this notion of “extremity” apply to the U.S.? Surely there is injustice; but its current political manifestations are often subtler and more incremental—in the form of, say, the financial industry’s undue influence on our economy, by covert operations abroad; by state legislatures manipulating electoral boundaries, or adding regulations that don’t revoke, but make it just that much more difficult to practice, the rights you are constitutionally given—such as the right to vote. (Yeah, I’m talkin’ to you, Texas). In the U.S., political disputes have not emerged into protracted movements of violence or totalitarian repression. Here, poets are not jailed, or killed, for writing poetry. It is a bizarre irony that the political authority of the American poet is to some degree diluted by the very right of free expression the American constitution grants. In America, poets are free—to be ignored.

But despite critics’ complaints, there is excellent political poetry in the U. S.—too much and too diverse to name even a few poems in this space. The poems I most admire tend to intimately engage in the political process itself: pointing out injustice, propelling the arguments. Some of the deliberately postmodernist, experimental poets call for, and practice, a poetry of disruption, employing techniques that “interrogate” the conventions of a coherent voice, discourse, or referentiality in poetry. (I put “interrogate” in scare quotes because I simply cannot take the word seriously when used by critics in this context.)
realize I haven’t the talent or experience to write a good poem in the time frame I’m given. So instead, I turn to poems I’ve already written, to see if one might work for the occasion. And here’s what I discover: that any poem is a public poem, if read publicly. The poem I’ve offered is one whose origins are most personal. Before this public, it will be a public poem; it will be political. Will it be a good public poem? This depends first on whether it’s a good poem. Wish me luck.

**Last Supper in Hanoi**

_Mo H Saidi_

**Part One:**

_Breakfast in Saigon_

11/30/2013. It has been a week since I returned from Indochina, but the stubborn jetlag that has confused my circadian rhythm has not yet disappeared. Every morning I still consume more than a few cups of dark coffee to overcome the effect of the eleven-hour lapse, and every evening I go to bed hoping my pre-trip sleeping habit will prevail. Eventually, I do fall asleep after reading a few pages of fiction, although my sleep is so superficial that my dreams frequently get mixed with reality. I dream about the long line of barefoot Buddhist monks in saffron robes striding down the well-swept streets of Luang Prabang, their polished silver bowls suspended in a bamboo sling by their hip; not begging, but offering the devoted population a chance to participate in the daily dawn ritual of meritoriously donating sticky rice to the monks. The peaceful procession takes place at a fast pace: people kneel by the side of the road, bow as the monks pass, and place the rice in the bowls, paying homage to their humble and peaceful presence. There is no conversation, only bowing by donors and nodding by the monks. I awake to the sound of the wind rustling dry leaves in the courtyard.

11/06/2013. I struggle in bed for a while. Through earphones, I keep my mind preoccupied with listening to audio fiction. After more than two hours of listening to My Son, to the description of the horrific massacre of the narrator’s mother and sister, I finally succumb to a shallow slumber. Unfortunately, the novel’s brutal scene leaves its mark in my brain, and a series of dreams about the trip runs through my skull. It’s now 6 November. I find myself in Luang Prabang, Laos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the ancient capital of Cambodia. We are visiting Wat Xieng Thong, which houses an ancient golden Buddha statue. A few hundred yards away, two young monks walk barefoot along the Mekong River. A lone fisherman squatting at the very tip of a long narrow canoe throws his wide fishing net into the muddy waters. In the dream, he struggles to pull out the net without losing his balance and finally harvests a small dragon. But in reality, and when I awake and recall the scene, he pulled out river weeds. I fall asleep again and find myself walking through the early morning market in the same city, following our intelligent female guide, Thum, who treats me to a sizzling patty of fried sticky rice.

11/27/2013. I believe it’s imperative for me to go back to sleep. After reading a few pages of fiction, I return to my Indo-china dreams, to the first breakfast in Saigon in the luxury hotel. From the huge array of choices, I select a bowl of spicy chicken pho enhanced by a few drops of chili sauce, soy sauce, and lemon juice. In another dish, I place slices of papaya, watermelon, and passion and jack fruits. Soon thereafter we are in the bus riding the crowded streets of Saigon, where flocks of motorcyclists compete for space with passenger cars—mostly Japanese brands, with Toyotas predominating—in an orderly drive to their destination. Many female riders wear colorful face masks to minimize the effect of sunshine. I am told Vietnamese of both genders prefer fair complexions and avoid tanning.

The Vietnamese guide, Sôme, announces over the loudspeaker that our next destination would be the Cu Chi Tunnel network that even ran underneath some American military bases in South Vietnam. Then we would visit Independence Palace, where Viet Cong tanks flattened the high iron gates on 30 April 1975, thereby ending the Republic of South Vietnam and uniting South and North Vietnam once and for all. In the Cu Chi tunnel, the guide takes us to one of the well-preserved entrances. Here I squeeze down into one tunnel. Using a flashlight I find my way to a narrow landing and crawl a few yards into a clean side tunnel. I espy an extension which leads to a tiny, rudimentary hospital with two simple bamboo beds.

Although these tunnels were once the underground hideout and staging areas for Viet Cong attacks, they were hard places to spend extended periods of time because of the absolute darkness, lack of oxygen, and infestation with rats, snakes, and scorpions. Even so, they made the war unwinnable for Western forces.

Gene, a Vietnam veteran who had served three tours in South Vietnam remembers that by the late sixties, the American “Tunnel Rats,” specially trained soldiers, had made these tunnels obsolete. But the American War, as described by the guide, is a foregone event for the young Vietnamese we encounter. It’s only one chapter in Vietnam’s long struggle to achieve independence. The guide briefly mentions the almost one thousand years of Chinese occupation, and then the hundred years of harsh French rule, interrupted by the Japanese, and the last foreign power, the United States military. He mentions that the new generation of Vietnamese is more concerned about living standards and job security than about their bloody past. “We like American tourists. They are intelligent, curious,” he says, “and above all, they are generous.” Yet for us American tourists, especially for Gene who saw several of his buddies die in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta, the memories are vivid and heart-wrenching. Yet he doesn’t say anything and quietly follows the tour.

We now are visiting the Independence Museums, the former Royal Palace. The guide leads us through glittering South Vietnamese government offices. At the end, he gives us ten minutes to ourselves to walk through the reunification museum in the basement. But only a handful of tourists, including Gene and me, continued on page 41...
Enhanced Torture and the War against Terrorism
An Excerpt from Dark Law
by Robert Flynn

“We tortured people unmercifully. We probably murdered dozens of them during the course of that, both the armed forces and the CIA.”


John McCain wrote, “In my view, to make someone believe that you are killing him by drowning is no different than holding a pistol to his head and firing a blank. I believe that it is torture, very exquisite torture.” (Newsweek 11/21/05)

At the Nuremberg Trials of suspected Nazi war criminals, the accused’s defense was consistent: they had broken no laws. Incredibly, that was true. However, prosecutors of the International Military Tribunals claimed there was a higher law, and their crime was a crime against humanity. The prosecutors charged the defendants with “judicial murder and other atrocities, which they committed by destroying law and justice in Germany, and then utilizing the emptied forms of legal process for the persecution, enslavement and extermination on a large scale” (Holocaust Encyclopedia: “US Holocaust Memorial Museum”).

The accused pleaded Nullum crimen sine lege (no crime without law), the moral principle in criminal law and international criminal law that a person cannot or should not face criminal punishment except for an act that was criminalized by law before he/she performed the act. Subtler versions of this principle require crimes to be declared in unambiguous statutory text (Cornell University Law School).

A law enacted in 1994 forbids torture by US military personnel anywhere in the world, and the Bush administration looked for a way to get around that law. As the first anniversary of 9/11 approached, and a prized Guantánamo detainee (Abu Zubaydah) wouldn’t talk, the Bush administration’s highest-ranking lawyers argued for extreme interrogation techniques, circumventing international law, the Geneva Conventions, and the army’s own Field Manual.

In August 2002, a memo, signed by then head of the Office of Legal Counsel Jay Bybee, was referred to as the so-called “Golden Shield” for CIA agents who worried they would be held liable if the harsh interrogations became public. A year later, after reported abuses of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the “Golden Shield” was leaked to the press (Ibid.).

In an interview with Democracy Now (4/3/08), Philippe Sands asserted that Rumsfeld approved fifteen techniques of interrogation and left open three other techniques, including waterboarding. Those techniques were used over a period of fifty-four days on Mohammed al-Qahtani at Guantánamo, until Alberto Mora, general counsel for the Navy, stepped in and stopped it. “Diane Beaver was the lawyer down at Guantánamo. Mike Dunlavey was her boss. General Hill was the commander of United States SouthCom based at Miami. I’ve spoken to all three of them, and both Diane Beaver and Mike Dunlavey, who have largely been scapegoated by the administration, described to me the visit that Attorney General [Alberto] Gonzales made, accompanied by Mr. Addington, who’s Vice President Cheney’s lawyer, and Jim Haynes, who is Rumsfeld’s lawyer. They came down. They talked about interrogation techniques. They apparently even watched an interrogation or two. I was told that the driving individual was Mr. Addington, who was obviously the man in control. And I was told in particular by Diane Beaver that she was quite fearful of Mr. Haynes, and she also shared with me that Alberto Gonzales was rather quiet.”

The torture technique discussed most was waterboarding or mock drowning: “Waterboarding can cause extreme pain, dry drowning, damage to lungs, brain damage from oxygen deprivation, other physical injuries including broken bones due to struggling against restraints, lasting psychological damage, and death” (“Open Letter to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales,” Human Rights Watch, 4/5/06).

A prisoner is bound to an inclined board and water is poured over his face, inducing a terrifying fear of drowning. It can result “in immediate and long-term health consequences. As the prisoner gags and chokes, the terror of imminent death is pervasive, with all of the physiologic and psychological responses expected, including an intense stress response, manifested by tachycardia (rapid heartbeat) and gasping for breath. There is a real risk of death from actually drowning or suffering a heart attack or damage to the lungs from inhalation of water. Long-term effects include panic attacks, depression and PTSD. I remind you of the patient I described earlier who would panic and gasp for breath whenever it rained even years after his abuse” (Statement by Allen Keller at the Hearing on U.S. Interrogation Policy and Executive Order 13440, 9/25/07).

On August 31, 2011, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, a former aide to one-time Secretary of State Colin Powell, told ABC News that Dick Cheney “was president for all practical purposes for the first term of the Bush administration” and “fears being tried as a war criminal” (UPI 8/31/11).

Holocaust survivor Jean Améry, a victim of torture, wrote about it in At the Mind’s Limits (1980). Torture, he wrote, was a monstrous immorality because it violated another person’s body, reducing it to a vessel of fear and pain. Under such distress, the victim confesses to anything, even the wildest fictions and fantasies, as Améry did when tortured.

Bush officials claimed waterboarding was legal, safe, and used to train US military to resist torture. However, US soldiers were volunteers, had been medically and psychologically examined before waterboarding by fellow members of the military, and usually were waterboarded one time, never more than twice, for about twenty seconds.

Dismissing the Geneva Conventions was nothing new. Nazi lawyers claimed that Allied units inside of German occupied territory were engaged in terrorist activities, and POWs could be summarily executed. A related order directed the population to retaliate against Allied airmen who parachuted from disabled aircraft. The airmen had been indiscriminately and illegally killing civilians in bombing raids and therefore were terrorists. Similar principles were adopted by Bush’s lawyers so that Bush could ignore the Geneva Conventions in his so-called “war on terror.”

The final irony may be that Germany prosecute Bush, Cheney, and other conspirators under the same laws that the US and its allies used to prosecute German Nazi criminals at Nuremberg.
Writing through Grief

Nan Cuba

Fiction writers have long channeled grief over the death of a loved one into their work, but that impulse is intensified when the person commits suicide. My brother, Paul Brindley, was twenty-six and I was twenty-three when he shot himself. In spite of his obvious depression about an accident that had left him a paraplegic, each person in my family felt guilty. In the first line of chapter one in my novel, Body and Bread, the protagonist, Sarah, says, “My first life ended when Sam committed suicide.” Sarah is an anthropologist, and the book is her attempt to understand how and why Sam died, and who was responsible. My unconscious motivation was to investigate the same questions but also to experience a spiritual connection to my brother, Paul.

When Poe’s cousin-wife, Virginia Clemm, died, he wrote “Annabel Lee” and “Ulalume.” Mary Shelley’s first child, a daughter, was born prematurely and died a few days later, the same year Shelley began Frankenstein. The next year, Shelley gave birth to a son, and the following year, a daughter. This means that while she was writing the novel, she was pregnant most of the time after her first baby died. According to Ruth Franklin in her essay, “Was ‘Frankenstein’ Really About Childbirth?” a journal entry Shelley wrote shortly after her daughter’s death reads, “Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lives.” Franklin argues that this echoes Dr. Frankenstein, who hopes to “infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet.” The creature’s birth occurs after “days and nights of incredible labor and fatigue.” Even though Frankenstein is seen as a cautionary tale about intellectual hubris, the death of Shelley’s daughter must have influenced the story. What parent wouldn’t want to bring her dead child back to life?

When Charles Dickens’ beloved sister-in-law, Mary Scott Hogarth, a seventeen-year-old Scottish girl, died suddenly, he had visions of her, dreamed of her frequently, and described her in a letter to John Forster as “that spirit which directs my life, and … has pointed upwards with an unchanging finger for more than four years past.” According to Philip V. Allingham from Lakehead University, Mary inspired Little Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop, Rose Maylie in Oliver Twist, Kate in Nicholas Nickleby, Agnes in David Copperfield, Lilian in The Chimes, Dot Peerybingle in The Cricket on the Hearth, Milly Swidger in The Haunted Man, and Marion in The Battle of Life. Citing Michael Slater, Allingham adds that Ruth Pinch, the governess in Martin Chuzzlewit, is another version of Mary, “Ruth’s sexless intimacy and joyous rapport with her brother Tom mirroring perhaps what Dickens felt his relationship with Mary had been in the three years he knew her.”

Georgina, Mary’s younger sister, moved into Dickens’ house as a replacement for Mary, and soon after, his main characters in The Battle of Life became Grace and Marion, sisters who resemble Dickens’ relatives in more ways than their initials. Both women in the plot love the protagonist, but Marion sacrifices any chance of happiness by vanishing so that Alfred will marry Grace. Nine years later, the same time between Mary’s death and Dickens’ writing of the story, Marion reappears as though returning from the dead. The narrator says, “[S]he might have been a spirit visiting the earth upon some healing mission.”

Most of Per Petterson’s protagonists are coping with the deaths of siblings and parents; they are reclusive, alone. In a recent New Yorker article, James Wood says a possible source for “the sense of hollow belatedness” is the 1990 Oslo-Frederikshavn ferry fire that killed 159 people, among them Petterson’s parents, brother, and nephew. As a result, Wood claims, “In Petterson’s work, the past ghosts its way back into the present with spectral power.” Wood believes this effect is achieved with sentences that “shift from present to past, mid-flow, without warning”; that they are often run-on, “tripping over their own dropped clauses, pricked with intermittence, properly punctuated but curiously unpunctuated.” As a result, Petterson captures “the staggered distances of memory: one detail seems near at hand, while another can be seen only cloudily; one mental picture seems small, while another seems portentous. Yet everything is jumbled in the recollection, because the most proximate memory may be the least important, the portentous detail relatively trivial.” In other words, the protagonist’s “life is drifting, like the sentences [he] voices.” Constantly recalling childhood and family history, the character’s focus on memory puts him at risk of immobilization. Wood describes it this way: “Haunted by tragedy, stalked by absence, competitive with the dead, yearning for restoration, [the characters] experience life as elsewhere … living two lives, two versions of heroism: the actual and the ideal, the slightly fuzzy present and the sharply etched past.”

In his memoir, Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation, John Phillip Santos investigates the mysterious death of an uncle by employing the Mesoamerican concept of cyclical time. Rather than a linear, chronological understanding of history, Mesoamerican cultures combined sober, historical fact with mythology and legend, connecting various dimensions from throughout the cosmos. According to Suzanne Ruta in The New York Times Book Review, Santos “erased barriers between the old and the young, the living and the dead, Texas and Mexico.”

Like Petterson’s characters, my protagonist, Sarah, feels “a hollow belatedness” and is a recluse, almost immobilized because of her grief. She uses her anthropological skills to investigate childhood years with her family, but her drifts backward also collapse dimensions and include periodic hallucinations during which she is transported to pre-Columbian sites. These episodes escalate, signaling her longing to escape the present. As a high school and college student, she had been fascinated with religion and various theological beliefs. Now, she’s an expert in Mesoamerican metaphysics. Her father was a biblical scholar, and after graduating from high school, Sarah joined a religious group that camped in the Texas Piney Woods. In college, she learned Coptic and studied the Dead Sea Scrolls. Sarah encouraged her teenage interest in pre-Columbian culture and gave her a copy of an Aztec jaguar mask that triggered her first hallucination. After Sam’s suicide, she became a student in the Ciudad Universitaria, where she learned Nahual and interpreted Mexihica codices. Her professor guided her through a tunnel beneath Teotihuacan’s Pyramid of the Sun, a place shaman-priests believed was the center of the earth. Standing in that hallowed spot, Sarah imagined that, like the Holy Ghost or teotl, the Mexicah sacred energy force, her brother’s spirit joined hers, that she became a living effigy housing Sam. This scene was my unconscious fictionalized account of a moment I’d experienced a few months after my brother’s death. I’d started crying while driving, so I pulled over to the curb.
Gripping the steering wheel, I promised Paul that I’d live my life for both of us.

While I was writing the novel, I didn’t analyze my motivation for Sarah’s interest in metaphysics or for her hallucinations. Like Shelley’s Dr. Frankenstein “infuse[ing] a spark of being into the lifeless thing,” or Dickens’ Marion “visiting the earth on a healing mission,” or a Pettersson character’s past “ghost[ing] its way back with spectral power,” or Santos’ erasure of the “barriers between … the living and the dead,” Sam’s otherworldly presence permeated the story and miraculously brought my beloved brother back.

Works Cited

Short Fiction
The Dance at Bougival
Jack Fay

Marcus Wellman burst through my office door at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday. He was jumping from foot to foot and waving his arms in four different directions at once. Spittle flew from his mouth as he shouted words I could not understand. I was shocked because hysteric has never been in Marcus’s repertoire. He is a quiet young man who speaks only when impressed with the urgency of a reply.

Marcus had been referred to me six years ago by his grandmother, the daughter of Victor Wellman, the last textile baron of Lowell, Massachusetts. In his early teens, Marcus became infatuated with works of the Impressionists. Today, at age twenty-five, the infatuation is an acute emotional fixation, which in my line of business falls into the category of personality disorder. My patient is not a violent person. He does not harangue or pester and would gladly go through life without ever having to say a word.

Marcus is remarkable for one distinguishing characteristic: his nose is shaped like a cucumber. But the strange configuration of his nose is not a total liability because it pulls attention away from a general blandness and a musculature that puts me in mind of Woody Allen. He dresses in muddled deck shoes, wrinkled khaki Dockers, and buttoned-down shirts with stripes of blue or black, and never a necktie. The Goodwill Store appears to be the source of a frayed Harris Tweed, replete with leather patches on the elbows. Were it not for his nose, Marcus is the sort of person that you’d forget within five minutes after having met him.

The protestations of his grandmother notwithstanding, Marcus had dropped out of Suffolk Law in the first semester of his third year. He took an apartment in a condominium on Huntington Avenue, from which he walks every day to the Boston Museum of Fine Art. From opening to closing time, Marcus wanders through the broad, high-ceilinged gallery whose walls are filled with Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist creations of Renoir, Degas, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and others.

My office is on Newbury Street, not far from Fenway Park. It is my habit on Saturday afternoons to catch up on paperwork. At 7:00 p.m., I lock away my notes and patient histories and take the elevator to the underground parking area. I crank up my not-new Mercedes and drive to Legal Harborside on the waterfront. Alfreda will be waiting for me at our usual table, one of the few that face the harbor. The view is pleasing but not more than that. On the white, heavily starched tablecloth in front of Alfreda will be a chilled bottle of modestly priced Chardonnay and two wine-glasses. I pour, and we touch glasses before the first sip. I will order the finnan haddie, and Alfreda will choose from the menu or the catch of the day.

The most pleasing and unexpected circumstance of my life is Alfreda, a more than attractive woman who accompanied me to the altar not quite thirty years ago. Why she married a bespectacled, over-weight, and early-balding senior at Boston University’s Medical School is nothing short of a miracle.

At 6:30 p.m., as I have said, Marcus rushed through my office door in a most excited manner. I took hold of a waving arm and ushered him to the leather armchair opposite my desk. I gave him a minute to catch his breath before pressing him to tell me the source of his agitation. He responded with a violent slap to his knee and choked out a single word: “Eloise.”

“Eloise?” I asked.

“Eloise, she dances at the museum.”

I was not aware that the museum featured dancing, so I lifted my eyebrows in a signal for him to continue. “Eloise dances in a painting called The Dance at Bougival. She is in the arms of a bearded man in a yellow hat. Clearly, the man is up to no good. I told Eloise to disengage herself because the man’s intent is to defile her.”

I put the defile part to the side. “When you speak to this girl, do you speak into the painting?”

“Yes, that is what I just told you. Eloise sees me and she flies out of the painting. Now to your question: I do not speak into the painting. I speak to Eloise after she flies out of the painting.”

“Eloise flies out of the painting?”

“No, that is what I just told you. Eloise sees me and she flies out of the painting. We talk, in French, of course. She is from France, as I am sure you can surmise.” A sadness crossed Marcus’s face and his eyes closed. In a faint, strained voice, he said, “Eloise is beautiful, so full of life and as pure as freshly fallen snow. And she is naïve, so very, very naïve. My sacred duty is to protect her from that beast in the yellow hat.”

Psychiatrists are used to hearing strange things, but this was different, and I needed to hear more. “Did you tell Eloise of your concern?”

“Have you been listening to me? Of course, I told her.” Marcus twisted in the chair and brought one knee over the other. He asked me if I thought him a liar. I assured him to the contrary. He went on, “When Eloise and I last spoke, I begged her to leave the painting and stay with me where she would be safe. Once again,
I told her that I loved her more than anything else in this world and wanted her to be with me forever. She said she wanted to be with me as well, but Monsieur Renoir would never permit her to leave. Her face registered an acceptance of what could not be changed, and my heart sank. I reached out to touch her hand, to assure her of my love, but before my hand could touch hers, she vanished instantly and returned to the painting, to the arms of that bearded pervert. ‘Come back, come back!’ I cried out. People nearby turned and stared at me as if I were crazy.

My patient wiped away tears. I resisted consoling him because he is a person who would interpret my well-meaning sentiments as patronizing. He ran both hands through his hair before clapping them together in a signal of despair. “Eloise is in danger. The bearded man is clutching her, leaning his face into hers, trying to kiss her. She is avoiding his unwelcome advances, as an unblemished maiden will do, but how long can Eloise keep the bearded beast at bay?”

I leaned back in my swivel chair and looked at Marcus until I had his attention. I told him he needed to return to his apartment, eat a good meal, watch a Netflix, get a good night’s sleep, and stay away from the museum for at least a week. I suggested that he pay a visit to his grandmother, who had not seen him for God knows how long. As Marcus mumbled agreement, I opened my appointment book and penciled in an entry. I told him to see me at four o’clock on Monday. He frowned and twisted in the chair. “Make it five-thirty,” he said. I understood why. The museum closes at five. Marcus was beyond heeding my counsel.

If it could be said that Marcus had been agitated on Saturday, he was frantic on Monday. He was shivering like leaves in a windstorm, his hair was a riot of tangles, and his eyelids were rimmed in red. The only feature of his face not affected by distress was his cucumber-like nose. His hands twitched even as he rolled them, one over the other. The clothes he wore were soiled, wrinkled, and wet; they were the same clothes he had been wearing when he had burst into my office on Saturday.

A psychiatrist should never lose composure, but I was powerless to resist giving Marcus a dose of admonishment. “My God, young man, consider your appearance, your demeanor. You look like a vagrant in the Common waiting to be arrested. What on earth have you been doing?” Marcus confessed to having returned to the museum when he left my office on Saturday. By then the museum had closed, so he huddled in the doorway all night and did the same the following night. He wanted to be near by in case Eloise needed his help, he explained.

I heaved a sigh filled with a determination to help Marcus get past the crisis. I told him, “Marcus, I want us to meet every day, for at least a week, starting tomorrow.” I gave him my most earnest stare.

With his chin resting on his chest, he jittered a response. “Five-thirty?”

“That will be fine. Until tomorrow, then,” I said.

Marcus arrived at my office at five-thirty the next day. His appearance had changed for the worse. The appalling condition of his clothes remained unchanged, and he had aged overnight. His eyes were lost inside black sockets, deep-set wrinkles ran across his forehead and down the sides of his face, and his jaw hung open so that a narrow stream of spit spilled over his lower lip. He moved in faltering steps, his shoulders sagged inward, and he trembled all over. You may recall that I said Marcus was agitated on Saturday and frantic on Monday. Today he was desolate. I helped him to the chair facing my desk, but he refused to sit. He said, “I have very bad news.”

“Oh?”

“Eloise will be leaving.”

“Leaving? How is that possible?”

“The Dance at Bougival will be among twenty paintings to go on an exhibition tour. On Friday morning the paintings will be taken down, crated, and placed on a truck. On Saturday morning the truck will leave.”

My right hand was on Marcus’ forearm ready to hold him steady should he start to fall. I pleaded with him to sit but he would not. He lifted his head so that his eyes met mine. “You know what this means, don’t you?” Before I could frame a reply, he provided the answer. “Eloise will be trapped inside a crate, inside a truck, in complete darkness and totally vulnerable to the machinations of the bearded pervert. She is afraid of the man. She knows his intention. She wants to leave the painting and be with me but she cannot. Her fate has been decided and I am unable to change it.” A bubble of despair rose from his throat as he pulled his forearm from my grip and turned away.

“Marcus, please sit. Let’s talk through this.”

He paid no attention to me and plodded toward the door. His hand was on the doorknob when I said, “Be here tomorrow, Marcus. At five-thirty. You must promise me that.”

He raised his right arm above his shoulder and waved his hand ever so slightly. As the door closed behind him, I called out, “Five-thirty!”

Five-thirty came and went on the following day. I was closing the clasp on my briefcase when the phone rang. The call was from Marcus, and it was short. “I have the answer,” he said and hung up.

I was sure Marcus was about to harm himself. I had to do my best to divert him from a rash action. I punched in the numbers of his apartment phone, but there was no answer. I called his cell phone—no answer. I drove to the museum. It was closed, and Marcus was not in the doorway.

When the museum opened on the next morning I was first to enter. He was not there. The rest of the day I made calls that he did not answer. That evening I called Marcus’s grandmother. She said she had not heard from him in over a month. With concern in her voice, she asked, “Is Marcus well?” I lied to her.

On Thursday, the day before The Dance at Bougival would be packed into a truck, I went to Marcus’s apartment building. The concierge, an attractive young woman in her early twenties, asked if she could help me. I told her I was there to see Marcus Wellman. She said she was not familiar with the name Marcus Wellman. When I described him to her, she smiled and said, “Oh yes, the man with the cucumber nose.” She told me she had not seen him in several days. “Feel free to check if you like.” She gave me the apartment number and pointed at a bank of elevators. I got off on the nineteenth floor and knocked on the door to Marcus’s apartment. I waited and knocked again, and again. On my way out of the condominium, the attractive young woman asked me, “Is Mister Wellman at home?” I told her no but that he might be at the museum.

It was near closing time when I arrived at the museum. A blue-haired lady at the information desk consulted a small map and gave me directions to the room where I could find The Dance
**Book Review**

*No Faith at All*

by Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

Reviewed by Mo H Saidi

Lahab Assef Al-Jundi’s new collection of poetry from Pecan Grove Press is a long song which echoes the voices of people longing for truth and peace. When I read his poems, I hear Rumi and Khayam. I peruse the mesmerizing poetry that brings me to the essential meaning of life. As both Naomi Shihan Nye and Robert Bonazzi have indicated, his poetry is modern meditation, a celebration of a poet who has almost reached freedom from myths and fanatic religious dogmas. As he declares in the title poem, “No Faith at All,” “We, / each of us, / need not feel bound, / by fear, / tradition, / or indolence, / to let others / dictate / what we believe!”

Like Rumi, Al-Jundi teaches us in a very gentle, effective way to free ourselves from the web of prejudice and bigotry and be seekers of truth. However, we must beware of our limitation to discover it: “In truth, my wakefulness is barely / able to stroke the fine-tuned ends / of its senses.

Lahab Assef Al-Jundi was born and raised in Damascus, Syria. He attended The University of Texas at Austin, where he graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering. The son of acclaimed Syrian poet Ali Al-Jundi, he discovered his passion for writing not long after graduation. He published his first poetry collection, A Long Way, in 1985. His poetry has appeared in numerous literary publications and many anthologies including In These Latitudes, Ten Contemporary Poets, edited by Robert Bonazzi, and Inclined to Speak, An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry. He currently lives in San Antonio, Texas.

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**National Poetry Out Loud Recitation Competition**

**TMI’s Participation**

2 December 2013

In 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation joined together to create the Poetry Out Loud program to encourage youth to learn about great poetry through exploration, memorization, and performance. After a successful one-year pilot program, Poetry Out Loud was launched in high schools across the country. The state winner will receive $200 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals. The national champion will receive $20,000; second place, $10,000; third, $5,000; and the fourth to ninth place winners will each receive $1,000. Their schools will receive $500 each to purchase of poetry books. TMI in San Antonio is the only local high school that participated in the 2013 competition. Ten selected students from each grade recited great poems and were judged by three published poets and one TMI faculty member. The first-place winner of the San Antonio schools competition was Elizabeth Holmes, a freshman at TMI (pictured above, photo courtesy of www.tmi.com), who will participate at the state final on 22 February 2014. For more information about this program, please visit www.poetryoutloud.org.
Persian Marchers: A Novel

BOOK TWO

The Flood

Chapter Nineteen

In the Office of the Local Revolutionary Guard

In the office of the local Revolutionary Guard, a young woman cowers in a corner while Mirza Hassan, who has a thick beard and unkempt blotchy hair topped off by a tightly worn military cap, listens attentively to his comrades’ report: “Chief, we brought this girl in for her unchaste clothing. She says she has read the official moral instructions, but look at her; she looks like a whore, her hair is not completely covered, her elbows and arms are blatantly visible, her skirt barely reaches her knees, her stockings are thin and light green instead of thick and dark, and when we confiscated her purse we found a man’s photograph inside.”

Mirza Hassan, now the Revolutionary Guard chief in this district, rises from his chair and walks threateningly close to the young woman. “What’s your real name?” He asks.

“I have only one. Shirin.”

“Are you married, woman?”

“No, not yet.”

“Who is the guy?”

“He is my friend.”

He slaps her face and shouts, “You are a whore!”

“You need to apologize, sir,” she sobs.

“Why are you carrying a stranger’s photo in your purse?”

“I told you, he is my friend, my classmate at the university.”

“What’s his name?”

“His name is none of your business,” she says.

Mirza Hassan kicks her in the chest and shouts, “Believe me, whore: to know his name is my business.” He calls a female Revolutionary Guard from the back room. “Sister, the whore needs education,” the chief says.

“Yes, chief,” the sister says. She renders the punishment—ten lashes for her exposed hair, ten for the light stockings, ten for the blue skirt, and ten for the boy’s photo.

“Put the bills from her purse in the safe for the shaheeds, and the coins, too.” Mirza Hassan says, “Get the name and address of that gigolo and bring him here tonight.”

They pull her hands behind her back and push her into a dark room. A stocky female Revolutionary Guard covered top to bottom in a black veil with only a patch of face visible, shoves her against the brick wall. She rips Shirin’s blouse down and unties her bra. The other female guard ties Shirin’s hands to a bar hanging from the ceiling a foot above the Shirin’s head. Shirin is in a state of dismay and confusion. Her eyes follow the movements of the guards. The first guard’s face gets close to Shirin’s face and shouts, “Look, you have one chance to avoid all this misery and go free.” Shirin despises her stench.

Petrified, Shirin says, “I’m sorry, I’m a bit confused now … I don’t know what to do.”

“I understand, lady. We see ignorant women like you every night. All you have to do is to show some remorse and maturity and ask for mercy. Not from me or from the chief, but from Imam Khomeini. He will forgive you for all your misdeeds and anti-Islamic sins.” The guard calls her comrade and asks for an atonement form.

The first guard shows the paper to Shirin and explains to her that if she fills out the form and signs it she can be freed on probation for thirty days. After that she will be permanently pardoned provided she doesn’t commit any anti-Islamic offenses.

“I don’t know what to do. May I call my father?”

“No. Believe me, you don’t want to get your parents involved, because if they come here, they have to sign the same atonement form and if they don’t, they will be flogged, too.”

“I really want to talk to my father.”

“Don’t, you stupid girl.” The guard loses her patience. “Your mom will be flogged, too.”

Shirin closes her eyes. With a deep breath she manages to regain her composure and makes up her mind. “Go ahead; flog me as many times as you wish. I have faith in God. He will punish you all for all this.”

The two guards take turns and whip her as forcefully as they can. They pause to wipe Shirin’s oozing bruises with a coarse cloth that induces throbbing pain, more ooze. She screams. She shouts. She curses. And she sobs. And they whip and whip. She is shivering from the pangs of pain, of cold and thirst. She is dizzy. Her vision gives way to blackness.

It is midnight when they are done flogging Shirin and other young women. They pull Shirin’s hands off the bar, drag her into the waiting room, and drop her on the floor next to other women; some stubborn and fearless like her with a bloodied body on the ground, and a few with the copies of the signed forms in their hands sitting on the benches, waiting to be released. Shirin is in the fetal position and keeps her back away from the rough brick wall. Streaks of blood run from the cuts and bruises.

Shirin slowly regains her composure and crawls up to one of the benches. She breathes, slow and shallow as not to expand her chest, not to trigger the sharp pain. The guard behind the desk looks at her with contempt and tells her that she is now free to leave. Shirin stumblest onto the sidewalk and lifts her arm as a handkerchief so Shirin does not see his anguish.

Chapter Twenty

It Had Been a Long Day for Cyrus

It had been a long day for Cyrus. After finishing his last surgery, he left the hospital near midnight. The late summer night in Texas embraced him with its heat and humidity. He left his car windows open during the short drive home, listening to the cicadas buzzing in the trees. In the cul-de-sac in front of his house, he barely avoided hitting a doe that jumped away to join a herd of deer leaping towards the trees covering the nearby creek.
He entered his dimly lit house and saw his daily mail on the counter in the bar where his wife had left it; he thought he would deal with it in the morning. He drank a glass of cold water and quietly went to the bedroom, careful not to disturb his wife. She was asleep. The house was quiet and the doors of the children’s bedrooms on the other side of the single-story house were shut. Only their Siamese cat was awake and looked at him with squinting blue eyes.

He had barely fallen asleep when the phone rang. His mumbled “hello” was answered by the strong voice of his brother Parviz, calling from Tehran.

“Mother is very ill. She has lost a lot of weight since Norooz. Her abdominal cramps are so painful she can hardly sleep at night. Your colleague Dr. Shaad suspects she may have stomach cancer.”

Cyrus was jolted out of his sleep by the word “cancer.” He adjusted the phone and said, “Who has cancer?”

“Mother is not doing well. She wants you to come soon,” Parviz said, ignoring the question. Cyrus was not yet completely awake and muttered some words of sympathy.

Parviz sensed Cyrus’s sleepiness and insisted, “Cyrus, listen! This is serious now. Mother is very sick.”

When he got another mumbled response, Parviz shouted, “Wake up, Cyrus! Please, listen. You need to come here as soon as you can. This may be your last chance to see Mother!”

Cyrus shook his head and looked at Emily, who was by now awake, too. She had turned on a light, picked up a book from her nightstand, and read, trying to ignore the loud Farsi conversation next to her. His immediate thought was to drop everything and fly to Iran as soon as possible, but how? It was August 1989. More than ten years had passed since the Islamic revolution. Enmity between the U.S. and Iran had created a rift so deep that the two countries were close to undeclared war. All political ties between the two countries had been severed. Commerce and travel between them were forbidden. No American citizen was tolerated on Iranian soil.

Cyrus lowered his voice, “Parviz! I want to come, but how can I do that? I am an American citizen, and I can’t get a visa to Iran.”

Parviz suggested, “Why don’t you come as an Iranian citizen?”

“I don’t know whether my old Iranian passport is still valid. It was issued by the Shah’s government!”

“So what! Apply for a new passport from the Islamic Republic of Iran office somewhere in Washington and use that to come here.”

Wondering whether it was quite that easy, Cyrus conceded. “I’ll do my best to arrange it, but if I fail let’s ask Mother to come to the U.S. That may be a better option anyhow, because I can arrange for a complete medical evaluation here and make sure she gets the best and most up-to-date care.”

Parviz replied, “I’ll mention this to her, but remember, it is really difficult to get an exit permit to leave Iran. Also, getting Mother a visa to enter the U.S. will be another problem and would require her to go to Europe first because there is no American Embassy in Iran anymore.” Cyrus interrupted, “That can be arranged easily. I’ve sent invitations to some friends of mine, and they got a visa in Europe and came to America. She’ll need to spend only a day or two in Vienna with our relatives.”

“I doubt she is physically able to withstand the rigors of the long trip to the U.S.” Parviz objected. He paused, then added in a tone of calm gravity, “Cyrus, she may not live through all of that.”

At last Cyrus realized the severity of his mother’s illness and became thoroughly alarmed. “How sick is she really?”

“She gets weaker every day.”

“I’m sorry for Mother. I’ll do my best to be there soon.”

Parviz paused, reconsidered Cyrus’s problems, and said, “Okay, I’ll look into the possibility of her traveling to the U.S.”

He concluded, “But, please, give Mother a call later today and discuss your proposal directly with her.”

Their night disrupted, Cyrus and Emily went to the kitchen to talk. Emily was concerned when she heard how ill her mother-in-law was and tried to console her husband.

“Let’s have some tea and discuss our options,” she suggested, pulling out two mugs and their favorite chamomile tea. “It really would be better if your mother could come to the States. You could do so much for her here.”

She squeezed his hand gently and pleaded, “Please, my love, don’t go! It’s not safe for you to travel to Iran. Just look at the newspaper reports. No American citizen is safe traveling to Iran, especially you, an Iranian with American citizenship.”

Cyrus replied pensively, “Mother is not well enough to travel overseas. Even though I could convince her to come here, I should really explore the feasibility of traveling to Iran as soon as possible.”

When the first light of day entered their house, Cyrus called his mother. It was early afternoon for her, and she was overjoyed.

“Mother, tell me what’s going on with you.”

“I’m fine now. So good to hear from you.” Her voice was weak and old.

“I’ll do my best to come to Iran, but getting a new Persian passport could be a problem. Please, consider coming here.”

She responded dubiously, “I might not be able to make it.” Apparently Parviz had talked to her, because she acknowledged, “I understand your problems, and if it’s not feasible, I’ll come if I can.” She took a pause to catch her breath. “Parviz told me it wouldn’t be easy and it might take a few weeks to get a passport and an exit permit. Thank God I have plenty of help here. Parviz and Maryam have promised to do their best.”

“Let’s both work at getting the necessary documents. Whoever succeeds first will travel!”

The old woman agreed, “But please try really hard to get a new Iranian passport!” she pleaded.

Emily implored him to be careful and begged Cyrus, “Please, promise me that your mother will come here if she gets her passport first.”

Cyrus assured her, “Believe me, that’s what we’ll do, if Mother is well enough to travel.”

Later that day Cyrus called Persian friends in New York and Chicago for the latest information about regulations concerning travel to their homeland. The Islamic Republic of Iran had cancelled all passports issued by the Iranian Monarchy and required all Iranians, regardless of their country of residence, to apply for new ones issued by the Islamic government. That presented technical difficulties for Iranians residing in the United States, because diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Iran had been severed since the armed occupation of the American embassy in Tehran.

Voices de la Luna, 15 January 2014 39
About three million Iranian nationals lived in the U.S., and all official documents were issued by a single Iranian Interest Office operating under the auspices of the Algerian Embassy in Washington, DC. That office was ill equipped to handle its large client population. A mere handful of telephone lines and only fifteen employees dealt with hundreds of requests each day. The office operated on a strictly limited schedule: from nine to three Monday through Thursday, with a long midday break for lunch and noon prayer. The Iranian Interest Office was closed Friday through Sunday for the Iranian and the American weekend.

The next morning, Cyrus spent one hour trying to connect to the Iranian Interest Office. He tried again in early afternoon in vain. His wife could not help make the call because she did not speak Farsi. He then assigned one of his employees at the office to call the number every few minutes. She had instructions to pull him away from whatever he was doing as soon as she succeeded.

By mid-afternoon, Cyrus was explaining the situation to one of the Iranian administrators. “My mother is gravely ill, and I need to visit Iran. How can I get a new passport?”

“Give me your address and I’ll send you the forms.”

“What documents are needed to complete my application?”

“Just read the instructions, fill out the forms and bring them here.”

Cyrus was astonished, “Can’t this be done by mail?”

The employee was polite but brief. “You need to come to the office in person. We don’t give appointments; everybody must wait in line. We can handle only fifty requests a day. I’ll mail you the necessary forms. Read them well and do as instructed, and you should have no trouble getting a new passport.”

Cyrus was worried about the waiting line, “Can I get into your office on the first day in line?” He had already heard about the long lines.

“It depends on how early you get here and how long the line is. Usually people come here very early in the morning to get a good spot. It may take you a few days to get in.”

“But that’s not possible! I am a surgeon and cannot leave my practice for an indeterminate period of time.”

The administrator promptly said, “Send your wife in your stead and be sure she observes the Islamic dress code, because we cannot admit her otherwise. I will enclose instructions for the proper attire for women who come to the Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

“Please send the forms via overnight express.”

“No problem if you pay for it.”

Cyrus submitted his credit card number and hung up. Two days later a package arrived from the Iranian Interest Office, and he spent several hours completing the forms. He enclosed ten photographs made according to the exact specifications requested. Emily would deliver the documents since her schedule was more flexible.

The next day, she flew to Washington, DC, and checked into a hotel near the Algerian Embassy. Before dawn, she took a taxi to the Iranian Interest Office. To her surprise, a long line of people was already waiting in front of the building. She counted over one hundred people in queue. Some of them told her they had been there since midnight and had brought folding chairs and blankets. The Iranian women in line advised Emily that the office would not allow her to enter, although she had no make-up, was dressed in a conservative suit and blouse, and wore a light silk scarf over her head. They told her that her hair needed to be covered completely with a dark colored scarf that had to reach to her shoulders. Emily thought it was demeaning to be forced to cover up in such a restrictive fashion when the young men in line were casually dressed for the warm summer day with shorts, T-shirts, and sandals, but the goal was to get a new passport for her husband. She resolved to follow the instructions to the letter and try again.

Although she joined the line even earlier the next day, she did not manage to get close to the entrance. On the third day Emily got up at 2 a.m., took a book and a flashlight, and successfully established a place in the early part of the queue. She counted the people ahead of her and was glad to be among the first thirty persons in line. Her dress conformed to that of all the other women in line. One could see only her face. Not a single strand of hair escaped from underneath the black shawl. The forward section of the scarf on either side of her face limited her range of vision. She thought it was positively medieval to be dressed this way. Despite her efforts, though, that day the Iranian Islamic Republic Office took only the first twenty people. No explanations were given, and an administrator instructed the rest of the people to go away. Emily removed the black veil, took a deep breath and returned to her hotel. She called her husband and reported her lack of progress.

“I am going to give it one more day before I return home.”

Cyrus agreed. He called his mother and begged her to proceed with her own travel arrangements to the U.S.

Shortly before noon on the fourth day, Emily finally entered the Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran. First she had to pass through a narrow metal detector gate. Then a woman who was covered from head to toe in a thick black veil stopped her and patted her down in a thorough body search.

Realizing that Emily was uncomfortable with the procedure, the woman explained with an apologetic smile, “I’m sorry, but we have to do this. Our office staff has been attacked by counter-revolutionaries many times. We are only trying to prevent bloodshed in this office.”

Emily responded with indignation, “We heard this same excuse when we visited communist East Berlin a few years ago.”

The woman ignored Emily’s reaction and said, “You may now proceed to the second window.” Like all the employees, she maintained a severe expression.

Emily felt as if she were in a foreign country. The small waiting room was empty of furniture. Only three large black-and-white portraits of religious leaders hung on the walls. She presented her papers at the second window. A bearded man in his mid-twenties reviewed the application and put everything in a manila folder. In barely adequate English he demanded to see her Islamic marriage certificate.

Emily was surprised at this request and said, “Such a document wasn’t mentioned in your instructions. Anyhow, we were married in Texas, not in Iran. I have never been to Iran.”

She feared all her efforts to get this far would be wasted. After four days of waiting in line, this unexpected demand could ruin her chances of obtaining a passport for Cyrus.

She burst into tears of discouragement and frustration and mumbled, “We followed all your instructions to the letter. Before I left Texas we made sure that we had every item listed. And now, you are asking for another document and we don’t even know what is
involved in getting it. My husband’s mother is about to die of cancer in Iran, and he must go there as soon as possible. Otherwise he might not see her alive.”

The employee showed no sign of sympathy for Emily’s plight. He was about to return the documents to Emily, when an older employee appeared behind the window. Apparently he had overheard their conversation.

He reviewed the forms and said, “I’m sorry, madam! It’s not your fault, and we can make an exception in this case. Do you have any document that verifies you are this applicant’s wife?”

Emily presented a notarized copy of their Texas marriage license. The older man glanced at it and said, “This is quite adequate. We can proceed with the passport application.”

He asked the young employee to add the notarized document to the folder and walked away.

“We will mail you the new passport within a week,” the young employee informed her after stamping every document and logging the request in.

Emily asked if the passport could be sent by express mail.

“Yes, if you prepay the extra fee,” the official replied.

Emily paid a hefty sum and left the building heaving a deep sigh of relief. Outside, she removed the big black scarf and shook her head, enjoying the liberating feeling of her long, blonde hair blowing in the breeze.

The passport arrived in two weeks. Cyrus booked a round trip ticket from Texas to Tehran through Frankfurt for the next day.

Emily’s last words at the airport were, “Come back soon, my love.” She was worried and tried unsuccessfully to hide it.

They hugged and kissed, and he whispered in her ear, “I’ll miss you, my love.”

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The flight from Texas to Frankfurt was smooth but long. After a reasonable meal and two glasses of wine, Cyrus took a long nap. In Frankfurt Airport, Cyrus spent more than five hours in transit, waiting for the connecting flight to Tehran. After browsing the duty-free shops for a while, he bought the London Times at a newsstand and settled in one of the cafes. A report from Amnesty International about Iran caught his attention. It described the human rights abuses, torture, and summary executions in Iranian prisons and put Iran on top of all countries in these categories. It quoted some surviving prisoners, who gave details about the harsh and inhumane treatment they had suffered in prison. Cyrus finished his café latte, left the paper, and went to his gate.

On the plane to Tehran, he was preoccupied with worries about his mother’s sickness and with anticipation of the changes in his hometown after the Islamic revolution. The crew was serving dinner, but he did not have much appetite.

“How about a drink?”

“Thanks, not right now.”

“This is your last chance,” the flight attendant reminded him.

“We can’t serve alcoholic beverages once we are over Iranian soil.”

Cyrus had a cup of tea and returned to his reading.

The young Persian woman in the adjacent seat looked at the cover of Cyrus’s book and commented in Farsi, “I love this author. I have read most of his books.”

They began chatting about various writers and then about travel to Tehran.

“This is my first trip to Iran since the revolution. I am pretty nervous about seeing the new Iran with its Islamic government,” she said.

Cyrus nodded, “I’m in the same boat.”

The woman explained, “I am going to Iran because my father just had a heart attack. If it weren’t for that, I wouldn’t have come. Everything I read about Iran these days is so discouraging. I hate to be forced into its oppressive dress and behavior code for women.”

Cyrus was reluctant to start a political discussion with a complete stranger and commented, “Isn’t it ironic? We both return to Iran because of medical emergencies in the family. I am going there because my mother is very ill.”

Soon their conversation lapsed and they returned to their books. Four hours into the flight, a stewardess announced that they would land in about twenty minutes.

She continued, “It is a requirement in the Islamic Republic of Iran that all women observe the Islamic dress code. Women must cover their bodies and hair completely. Only the face and hands may remain uncovered. Instructions on the dress code are located in the pocket of the seat in front of you.”

The woman next to Cyrus began cleaning all traces of make-up from her face. She unpacked a long black overcoat and readied it on her lap. Then she pulled out a large black shawl and wrapped it around her head. It took some time to tuck in all errant hairs. Looking around, Cyrus observed that all women passengers were busily changing their outfits. Make-up was removed. All traces of fashion disappeared under black veils or dark mantu, long-sleeved overcoats. In every part of the airplane, brightly colored summer birds turned into dark owls with pale faces.

to be continued...

Visiting Cu Chi Tunnel Network

... continued from page 32
visit the space, where the walls are covered with old war photographs. In the middle of one of the walls, I see the black and white photograph of a tank crushing the gate of the Royal Palace. I observe the glum face of Gene reading the English translation of the note below the picture. Another visitor watches the public execution of a Viet Cong fighter by a South Vietnamese officer. He wipes his eyes and moves on to another poster.

It’s raining outside. The throngs of tourists from various countries are racing back to their buses. In deep thought I walk along the tree-studded avenue where every tree is marked and numbered. Traffic is heavy and packed with motorcycles and cars, all moving along quickly but in an orderly fashion. The colorful helmets and face masks of the cyclists glisten in the light rain.
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, Bedrock.

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 Louis 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

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Rebozos by Carmen Tafolla

Winner of the 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

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

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

Wings Press 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 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 Catocalos’ 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 Catocalos’ 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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210-561-5858
1207 N Loop 1604 West San Antonio, TX
210-764-1104

For more than 100 years, our commitment and in-
volvement in the community have been an important
part of the way we do business.

The poetry and community services of Voices are
funded in part by a grant from the Ruth Lang Char-
table Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation.

Griffin Asset Management, LLC
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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, Bldg. 27, San Antonio, TX 78256. Host: Voces de la Luna: 6 pm Poetry Workshop / 7 pm Featured Guest / 8 pm Open Mic.

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


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

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

Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio

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

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

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

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

INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES – The Institute is concerned with the people who produced Texas events—people who created the robust kaleidoscope that is Texas today. www.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.srs.gob.mx/culturamexicaa/

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

PLAYHOUSE SAN ANTONIO—Call the box office for tickets and more information: (210) 733-7258. www.thetheplayhousesa.org

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.saxsymphony.org

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

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

For more Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio, see www.voicesdelaluna.com.

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.