“The Fountain Room, San Antonio, Texas” by Jesse Cardona
“Quantum Poetics” by Lahab Assef Al-Jundi
Questions for Reyes Cárdenas
“Abstract-Expressionism Comes to Texas” by Marti Nodine
San Antonio Spurs: The Beautiful Game
# Table of Contents

**Voices de la Luna, Volume 6, Number 4**

**Editor’s Note, James R. Adair**

3

**Cover Page Art: Sabine Senft**

4

**Artist’s Statement, Sabine Senft**

4

**Featured Poet**

The Fountain Room, San Antonio, Texas – The Old Courtesy Clerk – El Lavaplatos from San Luis Potosí – El Ex-Bailarín, Jesse Cardona

5

**Featured Interview**

More than a Revolution: An Interview with Reyes Cárdenas, Octavio Quintanilla

6

**Collaboration in Literature & the Arts**

Department Chair’s Welcome, Mark Bayer

8

Much Ado about Nothing

8

Shakespeare’s Continuing Influence

8

It Told Me More than I’d Ever Known about Her, Elaine Wong

9

**Book Reviews**

This River Here: Poems of San Antonio (Carmen Tafolla), Mo H Saidi

11

Eight Mile High (Jim Ray Daniels), Mo H Saidi

11

Lavando la Dirty Laundry (Natalia Treviño), Mo H Saidi

12

Smarter (Dan Hurley), Maria Oddo

35

**Youth Poems**

Cracks of My Mother, Courtney Collins

14

Lonely, Aidan Cole Graves

14

Connections Die, Anastasia S. Hejduk

15

Thank You, Mom, Nabiha Zaman

15

Growing Old to Grow Young, Tabitha Baladez

15

**Select Poems**

I Was Never a Militant Chicano, Reyes Cárdenas

10

Ulysses (excerpt), Alfred, Lord Tennyson

13

National Poetry Month, Fernando Esteban Flores

16

Ireland, Burns Taylor

16

Arriving at Pompeii, Vincent Spina

16

Quantum Poetics, Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

17

Stone Haiku, Sarah Munley

17

Bee Boxes, Joseph R. Trombatore

17

White River Repose, Kenneth E. Hada

17

Lambert Astronomy, Wendy Thornton

21

In Dictionaries, Robert Allen

21

What I Now Know, Alan Berecka

21

Why I Went to College, Shinji Mimura

21

The Poet and the Artist Compete, Martha Grant

22

The Traveler’s Life, Jasmina Wellinghoff

22

Indifference, Harold Rodinsky

22

Molting, jo reyes-boitel

22

Rapid Reaction, Lauren Walthour

23

Snake, D. H. Lawrence

23

The Song of the Pilgrims, Rupert Brooke

35

Sailing to Byzantium, W. B. Yeats

37

**Editors’ Poems**

Coca Chewing in a Quito Museum, Carol Coffee Reposa

20

Over Easy, Finally, Joan Strauch Seifert

20

Mayan Princess, James R. Adair

20

**International Poems**

Tarde en el Hospital, Carlos Pezoa Veliz (Afternoon in the Hospital, trans. Gerard S. Robledo)

18

Agua, Gabriela Mistral (Water, trans. Gerard S. Robledo)

18

Im Gegenwind, Hejo Müller (Against the Wind, trans. James Brandenburg)

19

**Art & Culture in the City**

Poetry and Art at Gallery Nord

14

San Antonio—The Saga

14

Poetry & Arts Events

44

Poetry & Arts Places

44

**Poetry Therapy**

The Day of Rain, Marisol Macias

24

A Place, Donald Farr

24

I Hear Her Weeping, Peter Holland

24

Untitled, Philip Trujillo

24

The House of Memories, Kiyoe Cook-Kroeger

24

Garbage Man, Tom Keene

25

House of Hearts, Mike Gilliam

25

Funeral Dirge, Milo Kearney

25

Glass Walls, Janie Alonso

25

My “New” Voice, Jonah Ball

25

Open Hearts and Hands, Tom E.

26

Not Dead, Amanda Hernandez

26

**Poetry & Dreams**

A House in Iraq, Terry L. Braddock

27

A Senior Leader’s View on PTSD, Terry L. Braddock

27

**Art Therapy**

Memories, Maripat Munley

26

Through My Eyes, Richelle Howard Vasquez

26

Galaxies, Siara Foster

26

**News & Notes**

Remembering Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014)

12

Maya Angelou: An American Original (1928-2014)

13

Lost Tolkien Tape Discovered

13

Tolkienian Runic Extensions to Unicode

13

San Antonio Spurs: The Beautiful Game

27

**Essays**

Abstract-Expressionism Comes to Texas: Mark Rothko’s Chapel in John and Dominique de Menil’s Houston, Marti Nodine

28

Race, Or …?, Chuck Taylor

30

Last Supper in Hanoi, Part Three, Mo H Saidi

36
Voices de la Luna is a quarterly publication dedicated to the artistic expression of a wide range of perspectives and topics. In the service of that goal, we welcome diverse, well-written submissions from every quarter.

---

**Short Fiction**

The Fishman, *Holly Rice* 32

Tainted Soil, *Hanne Arts* 33

Running through Thunder, *Jeanne Mulligan* 34

Happily Cobbled Lives (A Satire of Sorts), *Joan Strauch Seifert* 34

**Serialized Novel**

Persian Marchers, Chapters Twenty-Two (continued), Twenty-Three, and Twenty-Four, *Mo H Saidi* 38

**San Antonio Small Presses**

Wings Press 42

Pecan Grove Press 42

Word Design Studio 42

**Our Sponsors**

43

Submission Guidelines 3

---

**Voices de la Luna**

Is Pleased to Announce

The HEB Annual Youth Poetry Contest

For Submission Guidelines Please Visit

HEB Youth Poetry Contest

at www.voicesdelaluna.com/submissions/

---

**Submission Guidelines**

To submit material for publication in *Voices de la Luna*, go to voicesdelaluna.submittable.com.

---

**Voices de la Luna Monthly Literary Evening**

Poetry and Arts Presentation

Every Fourth Wednesday, January through June and September through December

Poetry Workshop at 6:00

Featured Poet at 7:00

Poetry, Music, & Open Mic at 7:30

Barnes & Noble at the Shops at La Cantera

15900 La Cantera Parkway, Bldg. 27

San Antonio, TX 78256

---

**Editor’s Note**

James R. Adair

Depending on where you live and your upbringing, summer may conjure up different ideas in your mind. Swimming, summer camp, baseball, picnics, late nights lying on the ground looking up at the stars, catching fireflies in a jar, watermelon, scorching hundred-degree days, riding bikes around and around and around the neighborhood—these are a few of the memories that summer brings to mind for me. And yes, there is one more: the family summer vacation.

When I was young, I lived in south Texas (as I do again now), but all my relatives lived in either east Texas or west Texas, so my family spent part of the summer trekking either 200 miles one way or 350 miles the other to visit grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. When I had children of my own, the trip to visit family was 1000 miles, but we also occasionally took trips to more exotic locales than relatives’ houses: Big Bend, the Grand Canyon, California, the Bahamas, and Key West, just to name a few. And I was lucky enough for a few years to work for an organization that would sometimes send me on “work-related” junkets to Italy, England, Germany, or South Africa.

Most of the trips I’ve taken recently have been of the mental variety (which has the added advantage of allowing me to travel through time as well as space), as I’ve lost myself reading about medieval Europe, the Byzantine Empire, the ancient India of the Bhagavad Gita, the Napoleonic Wars, and Texas of a bygone era.

This issue of *Voices de la Luna* has several pieces that treat the theme of travel, either real or virtual. Join our authors and artists as they explore different lands and interact with different peoples, some actual and some imaginary. The journey begins with Sabine Senft’s cover art, *Reception IX*, inspired by her trip along the Texas-Mexico border and through the Rio Grande river valley. In “El Lavaplatos from San Luis Potosí,” featured poet Jesse Cardona reminds us that we can sometimes encounter the world not by traveling long distances but by meeting people from other places and cultures. Poet Reyes Cárdenas, in his interview with Octavio Quintanilla, transports us in time to Texas of the 1950s, and he also invites us to travel with him into the Tejano experience of that time. As you read this issue cover to cover—as you will no doubt want to!—you’ll travel with London’s Globe Theatre company as they present *Hamlet* in every country around the world. You’ll meet a French visual artist who uses an old Spanish architectural icon as his canvas. You’ll be reminded of travels you’ve probably already taken with J. R. R. Tolkien to Middle Earth. You’ll visit Pompeii and Ireland, Jerusalem and Mars. You’ll walk with Whitman along the open road, visit a village on the Rhône, stroll through villages in Ecuador and Honduras, and take a detour through Yugoslavia, Sicily, and Hanoi. Observe firsthand the Iranian Revolution and its aftermath, and then sail with Ulysses beyond the sunset.

Whether you leave the comforts of home this summer for an extended vacation or stay in the air conditioning and sleep in your own bed, I hope you’ll take this issue of *Voices* with you. Remember, as the old Nissan commercial said, “Life’s a journey: enjoy the ride!”
Sabine Senft studied sculpture and painting in Italy, Austria, and France, where museum studies and art workshops enhanced her education and perception. After earning her master’s degree in Munich, she lived and worked in Japan and London before moving to Brazil. Her art speaks powerfully through the juxtaposition of disparate elements and expresses the artist’s transcultural identity. It exudes a calm balance of process and concept.

Senft has won several awards, and her work has been exhibited and collected nationally in California, New York, Rhode Island, and Texas—and internationally in Japan, Germany, Austria, the U.K., and Brazil. Senft’s art is currently on display in Marfa, San Antonio, and Dallas. Her latest public art commissions have recently been installed at the University Health System Medical Tower in San Antonio (left). “Reception IX” is part of Borderline Reality, a series inspired by a trip along the Texas-Mexico border and through the Rio Grande Valley. It relates to the artist’s own upbringing near the German/Czech border during the Cold War, juxtaposing beautiful Texas landscapes and the current immigration topic.

**Artist’s Statement**

Most art practices cover a surface. My work addresses what lies beneath the surface and the idea of looking past perfection. Through multilayered painting, digital and stone sculpting techniques, I explore the power and frailty of perception in a society that worships digital realities. I am particularly interested in the layers that overlap to make up our experiences.

Viewers can venture and glimpse beneath the lush surfaces of my work. I encourage them to reflect upon their own perceptions and positions in the reality that surrounds them.

The dichotomy between beauty and suffering speaks powerfully in my art, yet it exudes a calm balance of process and concept. A distinct line in 24K gold leaf often completes my vision of the individual on a timeline of personal and cultural circumstances.

My enthusiasm for my materials has matured over the years but not diminished. Stone and gold are as old as humankind. They record and carry the past into the present (gold is essential in microchips!). They give us cultural identity. I give them new meaning. This is how my work fuses the ancient with the contemporary in medium, technique, and a fresh approach.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to live and work within many diverse cultures, including the vibrant Chicano culture of San Antonio. Each has added its distinct mark to my art and perception. Texas has been inspiring a new color palette in my work as well as the courage to venture into a new process: the interdisciplinary and multidimensional play with digital, gilding, painting, and sculptural techniques in a fresh, cohesive installation.
Featured Poet

Jesse Cardona

The Fountain Room, San Antonio, Texas

We serve Stromboli

Bartender, bartender
I’m so tired of headline havoc.
All week long I bob in the ebb
and flow of daily havoc.

Yes, I know others have heard
that same eternal note, but tonight,
bartender, I’m in dire need
of a cold, cold drink.

Señor cantinero, I’m in dire need
of some tintinnabulation. I’m so tired
of international innuendoes, urban desperados.
I’m in dire need of some Pérez Prado.
We need more mambos and less Rambos.

Oh, bartender, give me some change
for the jukebox.
We don’t need to know how many megatons
that bomb has got.

Oh, bartender, I’m ready for a slice
of “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White”
while I recite these lines
by that poet Matthew Arnold about
ignorant armies clashing by night.

The Old Courtesy Clerk

The old courtesy clerk writes a lot.
It goes back to when he was a stock boy
at La Quemazón, house of smoking hot prices;
the metaphor stuck; he does not plan to publish;
perish the thought; he knows he’s full of bosh,
like when he wrote: Courtesy Clerk Goes Beserk.
Yet he polishes each scribble like a Turkish lamp.

The old courtesy clerk double checks the dead
bolt, shakes his pillow case, wishing he could
wake up like a colt with giddy legs or better still
molt like a crab, the sweet crack of extraction.
But if he’s lucky, he’ll dream again of indigenous
hands stretching his wrinkled skin to tattoo
a brief history of Peruvian embroidery.

El Lavaplatos from San Luis Potosí

El lavaplatos from San Luis Potosí
scrubs stacks of Mexican plate lunch specials.

Mr. Luna, the fry cook, tells him,
“You’ve got to learn English, dude,
You’ve got to learn words like lollygag.
It’s the American way.
The boss calls me Mr. Moon, you know.”

On his lunch break el lavaplatos chats
with el Chicano, a ham radio operator,
who rents a room above the Mexican restaurant.
“Stay away from that loco,” warns Mr. Moon.
“He believes in platos voladores.”

With his first paycheck, el lavaplatos
wires dollars to his family,
buys a pair of black slacks and a belt buckle.
For Christmas he hopes to send his mom
some porcelain figurines.

One night, after too many tequila shots,
he dreamed of the largest tamal from la Huesteca,
el zacahuil wrapped in a banana leaf.

Were it not for the gleam
of the half-moons on his fingernails,
el lavaplatos would weep into the sink.

El Ex-Bailarín

El ex-bailarín sips his Ramos Gin Fizz,
his every black follicle snapped shut,
not a speck of dust on his spit shine.
At the last call for alcohol,

he pulls a pack of Juicy Fruit gum.
Knowing she’s gone for good,
he gimps back to his bungalow
where he becomes a blue robe.

Jacinto Jesús Cardona is the author of
Pan Dulce, a book of poems. He has been
awarded the Imagineer Award and the
Trinity University Prize for Teaching Excellence. He was also an NEH Visiting Scholar in lyric poetry at Harvard University, a Rosebud Magazine finalist for the William Stafford Poetry Prize, and a Gemini Ink La Voz de San Antonio Spoken Word Champion. He teaches English at Incarnate Word High School.
I first met Reyes Cárdenas at San Antonio’s Gallista Gallery in the fall of 2013, at the presentation of his book, Chicano Poet 1970-2010, published by Aztlan Press. He read for about forty-five minutes and then retired to a back table to savor the performances of his poems by other writers in attendance. Though quiet and reserved throughout the event, Cárdenas was approachable and friendly.

Author of Anti-bicicleta Haiku (1976), Survivors of the Chicano Titanic (1981), Elegies for John Lennon (1984, 2006), I Was Never A Militant Chicano (1986), and Chicano Poet 1970-2010 (2013), Reyes Cárdenas started writing when he was a child. He said, “Around the age of fourteen or so, I started writing sci-fi stories, which took place on the planet Pluto. I think they were inspired by all the sci-fi movies our parents took us to see at the local drive-in theaters.” Though Chicano Poet 1970-2010 collects poetry from his major works, a short farcical science fiction piece, Los Pachucos y los Flying Saucers, is also included.

Organized chronologically and covering four decades of Cárdenas’s work, Chicano Poet 1970-2010 is a record of a poet’s concern with language, story-telling, and social justice. Many of the poems in the collection are rooted in the Chicano Movement of the 60s and 70s, and many of them are short, often weaving imagination, humor, and gravitas. Juan Rodriguez, author of the introduction, points out that Cárdenas is a poet of “peace, justice, and freedom.” This is true. But it is also true that for Cárdenas, what he leaves on the page is definitely more important than what others leave on the page about him. On the page—that’s where revolutions begin.

Reyes Cárdenas was born and raised in central Texas.

Octavio Quintanilla: Reyes, there are a few things we already know about you. For example, we know that you were born and raised in central Texas and that you are a machinist by trade. Can you tell us how you came to be a machinist? Were you a machinist before you were a writer?

Reyes Cárdenas: I have always been a writer. I wrote my first stories in third grade. In the seventies I did house painting and carpentry work. In the early eighties I began working in the metal stamping industry, and later got into machine work, namely, CNC work, which is computer numerical machines. The operator loads the raw stock, be it aluminum, plastic, steel, or any of a number of exotic materials, and the program makes the part.

Sounds like you’ve done methodical work, work that requires some element of precision, work that could be akin to the act of writing. Do you think this type of manual labor has helped you as a writer, in your development in terms of craft? Is there a connection?

No connection.

In one section of your book Homage to Robinson, you pay homage to poet Weldon Kees’ neurotic alter ego, Robinson. Obviously, Kees has been an influence. But then there are also the Chilean poets, Nicanor Parra and Vicente Huidobro. These writers keep popping up in your work. If the work you’ve done to make a living has not played a role in your sense of craft, can you discuss the writers that have influenced you? What, for instance, did you learn from Parra, Huidobro, and Kees about writing poems?

In high school I read Parra’s Poemas y antipoemas in Spanish. I don’t remember where I picked up the book. I think I read Huidobro’s Altazor in 1971 and Poemas Articos. Weldon Kees I read because they had his book at the Seguin-Guadalupe Public Library in the mid-1960s. Odd as this may seem, I don’t think their influence came to fruition until the middle and late 1980s. This influence is most apparent, at least to me, in the poems which comprise the section, “Elegy For John Lennon.” That collection was really entitled “Elegies For John Lennon,” but got corrupted. But of course, almost every writer that I’ve read has in one way or another influenced my work. Most writers appropriate, some more than others. I guess that’s how we better the art. And hopefully, the species.

Poetry as a means to better the species. That’s interesting. With this idea in mind, what’s poetry’s value in a world of violence, human trafficking, drug cartels, genocide, war? You think poetry has the power to “better the species,” as you say? I guess I am thinking of Parra and his “antipoetry,” a poetry that questioned the value of poetry itself.

Parra was wrong in that, of course. If you question the value of poetry you must question it with something other than poetry. And of course, one can only improve part of the species, and we can only give it a chance to keep supporting that part of it.

“One can only improve part of the species…”? Can you elaborate on this?

The people who are open to be improved or sway themselves apart from genetics. The part that is, somehow, able to give to the common cause of good.

Tell us a bit about your childhood. What was your experience growing up in a small Texas town? Were you a migrant worker? Did you have to work as a boy?

I was actually born at home, in the county, raised on a farm until the age of twelve when my mother died in childbirth and we (my two brothers and sister) went to live with our grandparents in Seguin. I went to segregated schools in my early years. The first time I went to school with white kids was in third grade. I wasn’t a migrant worker, though my parents were. I didn’t really have to work the fields. I picked pecans in North Texas, picked cotton, but I was not made to do it. I wasn’t a good cotton picker anyway.

What was it like going to a segregated school as a kid? Did you know what that meant?

Didn’t really know it at the time. Growing up around discrimination was not a big deal for me, but I’m sure it affected others differently. I let a lot of the bad stuff roll off my back or shook it off. It was probably somewhat harder for the Black community than for the Mexican community as a whole, at least during the late 50s and early 60s.

Was it not a big deal because it was the only life you knew? Did you or your family ever witness or experience any blatant acts of brutality against Mexican-Americans or against Blacks during this time?

I did not witness anything like that in Seguin, at least during the 50s and 60s. Of course, from 1900 to at least the 1940s the violence against Mexicans and Blacks was much more blatant. I’ve heard stories of lynchings in downtown Seguin, but I have not read up on that. Only heard about it. I can’t talk about any specifics.

Are you from a long line of Tejanos? Or relatively recent immigrants?

Third generation Tejano.
You've mentioned that as a child a teacher read you historical poetry, and this is how your love affair with poetry began. Can you talk about your earliest connections to reading, to writing in general? While growing up, were there books in your home?

No books in our house. My mother read periodicals of some kind. She and her sisters sang at fiestas and weddings. She was also really into Mexican cinema, and we would often go to see Mexican movie stars at the Alameda in San Antonio. My sister is named after the Mexican actress, María Victoria.

Yes, the singer and comedian. It's interesting that you come from a family of performers. I saw you read at the Gallista Gallery in San Antonio, and I felt that the stage is not your thing. The word is my thing.

Maybe that explains why you haven't really bought into self-promotion. I mean, there's really not a lot written about your work. In his introduction to your most recent book, Chicano Poet, Juan Rodríguez points out that as a writer you've been neglected by the general American public and by your own ethnic community. Do you feel you've been neglected?

The people who recite the best are usually empty of words…. Do I feel neglected? For everything there is a season.

Do you feel your season has come?

No.

What if it never comes?

So be it.

But it seems like the season is ripe, Reyes. I mean, San Antonio's Aztlan Libre Press recently collected decades of your work. It's a retrospective in chronological order of writing done throughout your life. What's next in terms of writing? Where do you want to go?

I have a completed manuscript that I’m sending to Aztlan Libre. It’s a book of love poems. Don’t want to disclose the title just yet. My recent collection really means nothing if it is not accessed by a general audience and inspires others, present and future writers. If it just sits in boxes, it’s not a book. So, of course, I wish success for my book and for Juan Tejada and Anisa Onofre, the publishers. But a writer can only do so much once the book is written.

Love poems? I am looking forward to reading them. Were any inspired by Neruda, Huidobro’s and Parra’s countryman?

No, they’re not, but they are surrealistic. Love between an older man and a much younger woman, which causes the tension in the sequence. The poems are built around the same exoskeleton as my other series of poems which progress the relationship of the characters, but surrealistically maintain the prose story.

Speaking of prose, T.S. Eliot in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism said that the prose sense of a poem is chiefly useful in keeping the reader’s mind “diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him.” In your experience with prose in poetry, is this what happens?

Very true. You can only drive poetry so far off the deep end before it drowns like Flarff.

How were you involved in the Chicano Movement of the 60s and 70s?

I went to a few protest marches, but mostly wrote about it. I was not deeply involved mostly because I was making a living and far away from that sort of thing. Seguin was not a hub of protest.

Many of the poems written in the late 60s and early 70s are loud, confrontational, bombastic. In contrast, many of your poems are quiet, restrained even. Were you reacting with your style against the poetry of the time, or the approach being taken by some of the poets of that generation?

Actually, I was just writing the only way I was capable of writing. And really, most Chicano poets had different styles. There was no crowd of poets who rushed to rap a certain way, to coin a phrase.

I know that in the 60s and 70s you were reading Whitman, Hart Crane, Dylan Thomas, Robert Lowell, and Sylvia Plath. I’m thinking you were also reading Chicano poets such as José Montoya, alurista, Raúl Salinas, Ricardo Sánchez, Tino Villanueva, Abelardo Delgado, Juan Felipe Herrera. Did you ever come into contact with any of these poets?

Yes, I was reading all of them and knew most of them. I went to their readings whenever they were in Austin or San Antonio. I knew Raúl Salinas more than the others. Nephtali De León was also around then and published a lot.

You are a part of this generation of poets, then. What was one of the biggest challenges you faced as a writer during the early 70s?

Cecilio García-Camarrillo was also one of my influences in the 70s and also my publisher at the magazine Caracol. Challenges? Because I was publishing in Caracol, I never actively sought other publishing sources unless someone requested some of my work. During the 80s and 90s, I did not publish much in periodicals.

What do you think has changed, if anything, in the world of Chicano poetry, in American poetry, since the 60s and 70s?

Do you think Chicano writers are still being racialized, segregated when it comes to publishing?

I think it is getting better. But the writing has changed, too. Many early Chicano writers have died, or do not write anymore, so Chicano poetry is also changing in movement and style.

You’ve said that much of your writing takes into account current events in politics, music, and art. How important are personal memory and cultural memory in your work?

If I can meld them to create what I am after in a specific poem or poems, then it must remain part of the importance. But most of my poetry is not personal, maybe just an alter ego of that alter ego. At least that’s what I try for.

It’s probably one of the first precepts we teach students about poetry—the speaker of the poem is not necessarily the poet. But would you say there is some sort of emotional biography in the poems? It seems that you are trying to disassociate yourself from everything that is found in the poem. Is that possible?

No, it’s not possible. But in a narrative one has to create oneself over again. I am a boring person. My poetry would not be poetry if I let me be myself.

In the poem, “I Was Never A Militant Chicano,” you close the poem with the lines: “I was never / a militant Chicano, / but only because / I’ve always wanted / more than a revolution / continued on p. 10...
Department Chair’s Welcome

colfa.utsa.edu/english/welcome.html

I’d personally like to welcome you to the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. We are one of the largest and most dynamic departments on campus, offering multiple degree programs including a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D., with opportunities to focus on creative writing, rhetoric, and composition, in addition to all aspects of English and American literature.

Our faculty is engaged in groundbreaking research and creative publications, spanning topics as diverse as fourteenth-century prophecy, African-American spiritual autobiography, and contemporary Latina and Latino prison literature. And all of us bring the same passion for our scholarly pursuits into the classroom, allowing you to study with world-renowned experts on Geoffrey Chaucer, Jack London, and Henry Roth, or to workshop your poetry with decorated, published authors.

We sponsor a number of enriching programs throughout the year, including a week-long residency featuring actors from the London stage, the creative writing reading series, the Brackenridge distinguished visiting lecturer, the African American Literatures and Cultures Institute, and many more. We also offer you the opportunity to gain a new perspective on the literature you study in the classroom through study-abroad programs in London and in Italy.

Details on all our programs and events are available on our web page. Feel free to contact me anytime by email or phone, or stop by our offices located in the Main Building 2.314.

Mark Bayer, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of English

Much Ado about Nothing

William Shakespeare’s play Much Ado about Nothing will be performed in the Recital Hall at UTSA on Oct 1, 3, and 4, 2014. One of the Bard’s most popular comedies, it is also one of his few plays of which the majority was written in prose rather than poetry. Check the English department’s web page for further details in the near future.

Shakespeare’s Continuing Influence

“Four hundred years have passed since William Shakespeare penned his last play. Yet his prose, plots and characters are as alive today as they were when the plays were originally staged during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.” So begins Cindy Tumiel’s article “Why Do We Care about Shakespeare?” in the Fall 2013 edition of Ovations, a publication of UTSA’s College of Liberal and Fine Arts.

Alan Craven, professor emeritus at UTSA, has taught Shakespeare to students for almost fifty years, and he encourages people interested in the Bard to put down their books, go to the theater, and experience his plays as they were intended: as performance pieces. “He is the greatest dramatist, the greatest poet, and the greatest prose writer in the history of the language,” says Craven.

Associate professor and English Department chair Mark Bayer agrees that Shakespeare remains a force to be reckoned with, not only for university English majors, but for the general public as well. Whether his continued grip on modern culture is due to the intrinsic merit of his work or to the whims of modern culture is debatable, says Bayer. “A certain amount of Shakespeare’s notoriety is predicated on hype.”

Yet Shakespeare is more than just “famous for being famous,” à la the Kardashians. Generations of theater-goers and readers alike have found something enduring in his words. His stories are told and retold in literature, film, drama, and by word of mouth. His works have been translated into almost every language on the planet. In honor of Shakespeare’s 450th birthday, London’s Globe Theatre in currently in the midst of an undertaking to perform Hamlet in every country in the world over a span of two years. For whatever reason, Shakespeare continues to capture the attention of the modern world. Consider the following quotes.

Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings. (Julius Caesar I.2)
Isn’t there a recent movie of that name?

To be, or not to be? That is the question— (Hamlet III.1)
Or, as the first clause has appeared on innumerable logic and computer science exams: &x32; &x42; \&- &x32; &x42;

Love all, trust a few. do wrong to none. (All’s Well That Ends Well I.1)
Cf. Google’s corporate motto: “Don’t be evil.”

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes. (Macbeth IV.1)
Title of a 1962 Ray Bradbury novel, and a song sung at the Hogwarts Welcoming Feast in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

To die, to sleep—
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there’s the rub,
For in this sleep of death what dreams may come… (Hamlet III.1)
1998 movie starring Robin Williams and Cuba Gooding, Jr.

For more on Shakespeare’s legacy, see “Why Do We Still Care about Shakespeare?” by Cindy Tumiel, utsa.edu/ovations/vol8/story/shakespeare.html.
The nurses called my mother’s stoma lips, only smaller, its pink the perpetual flush of an introvert caught by the world off-guard.

The exposure did not seem to bother the octogenarian mechanics that switched between reticence and small eruption—

a loop, like the ileostomy my mother had for her colon to rest and heal. Special diet, plenty of liquids kept the stoma active.

Covered by a plastic pouch, the stoma chewed not to ingest but to release in a rhythm neither clean nor dirty.

It needed gentle care like a baby, we thought; even the adhesion of the pouch irritated the surrounding skin.

I felt its nakedness when I cleaned it for my mother. How I had to steady my hands at the strength of a mystery that spoke almost beyond comprehension, like roundness unwrapping the hardest stones.

My mother watched with a child’s concentration.

Then her eyes met mine, and she was old again, old in her thankful smile. My gloved fingers traced the warmth of an oval, trembling at its murmur.

Originally from Hong Kong, Elaine Wong earned a Ph.D. in English from UTSA in 2013. She also taught literature and creative writing there, receiving a Wendy Barker Endowed Award in Creative Writing in 2013, a first place in the Creative Writing Competition at UTSA’s College of Liberal and Fine Arts Annual Conference in 2010, and a third place at San Antonio Poetry Fair 2011.
can provide.” In essence, this poem can be read as a critique of revolution, its failures. What are the failures of a revolution? What is it that the speaker of the poem wants?

Ah, the Arab Spring. The Mexican Revolution. We try. We wish for. What else can I say. The speaker of the poem is smart and he knows he’s hoping against hope, maybe. But still he dreams. He dreams the good dream.

So, you say that the speaker “hopes against hope … but still he dreams….” What is he dreaming about?

He dreams of the end of organized violence. He dreams for everyone to have a chance to make their dreams of freedom come true. And that would be at least a start.

Sounds pretty idealistic. But it’s a valid dream. And overall, the poem speaks of how a revolution can happen anywhere, even in quiet places, in quiet people. Are there any social or political issues that you are concerned with at the moment?

Without idealism you are welcome to what you have now. Like most, I share the desire for everyone to have their share of the world’s food. We have plenty, but it is not distributed evenly within the population. No easy solution until the mindset changes, if ever.

In the poem, “Poor Mexican Woman,” you write about a woman so poor “the fields / shied away from her.” But you end the poem on a note that speaks of family legacy, of generational transcendence. Referring to the son of this “poor Mexican woman,” you write: “he has no idea / how such a poor Mexican woman / could afford / to make him into a poet.” Was your mother in your thoughts when you wrote this poem? Did your mother ever get to read your poems? Or did you ever read them to her?

The poem is about any poor woman whose son or daughter draws inspiration from her strength to persevere. My mother died when I was twelve. I don’t know what she thought of my juvenile writings. If she talked to me about it, I do not remember.

You post quite a bit of new work on your blog (www.chicanopoet.blogspot.com). How does writing in a blog help your process? Your craft?

The blog is just a place to post new work since I don’t submit to magazines or journals.

Why don’t you submit to magazines or journals?

It requires too much work.

It can be time-consuming. And then the rejections. And then once in a while an acceptance note. Makes it worthwhile, I think. But let’s end our conversation with this question: Do you feel you take poetic risks? If so, in what way?

Actually, no. I’m a fairly conservative writer. If I step on the edge, I get tingly feet and step back. Let somebody lead the way and I will borrow.

I was never a militant Chicano
Reyes Cárdenas

I was never a militant Chicano
I was never
like El Louie
and I am not Joaquin,
I never had
to worry
about surviving
in my barrio;

I never had
the driving force
to create
The Crusade for Justice
like Corky Gonzales,
I could never be
a César Chávez,
and reach down
deep inside
the earth
to find that
awesome inner strength.
Some of us
are just unable
to sacrifice ourselves.
I was never
like Raúl Salinas,
Alurista or Ricardo Sánchez
creating a new
world of poetry
out of a white wasteland.
Some are leaders
and creators,
some are followers,
but the followers want
justice and liberty
and fairness, too.
I could never
shout like Tigre.
But inside
(right here)
I guess I can
roar just as loud.
I never shot up
a federal courthouse
like Reies Tijerina
but I know
that the frustrations
won’t stay
locked up forever.
I was never
really a pachuco
but I saw then what I still
see now—
that we’re
getting nowhere,
that things
are worse
than they were
in the forties.
I was never
the Che Guevara-type
but there’s
nothing wrong
with revolution.
Everybody says
it can’t happen here,
but, hell,
it can happen anywhere.
I was never
a militant chicano
but only because
I’ve always wanted
more than a revolution
can provide.
This River Here is Carmen Tafolla’s latest book, published by Wings Press. A native of San Antonio, Tafolla grew up in the West-Side barrios, where the streets were full of potholes and none of the neighborhoods had a library. Her middle school principal told her she might have a chance to go to high school. How little the principal knew, for she moved on to obtain a B.A., an M.A., and finally a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, in 1982. The most revered poet in San Antonio, she sings our city’s songs and symbolizes the heart of our community, its colorful cultural make-up, and its treasure, the sacred river.

The first poem, “This River Here,” narrates the tale of the river, which attracted her ancestors to settle here—“Right here / (or maybe a little farther down)”—and raise families, where generations lived contented and productive lives. The black and white historical photographs and prints complement the lyrical verses describing the peaceful livelihood of Native Americans and their struggle to achieve peace with newcomers from South and North. But the main focus throughout the book is the river that brings life to the area as “soft melodies ring from the leaves / from mission bells and tender voices / of children who play here between the centuries.” Tafolla values connections between cultures and magnifies the success of San Antonio’s colorful melange as a major attraction for national and international visitors, and the spicy Tex-Mex cuisine which is neither Mexican nor American but a hybrid and delicious taste of San Antonio itself: “Toasted morning light and dancing history— / earth gives birth to corn gives birth to man / gives birth to earth. / Corn tortillas—penny each.”

In a melodically rendered poem, “San Antonio,” she laments the ignorant people who fail to appreciate San Antonians: “They saw your skybirth and sunaltar / Your comindirt soul and mute bell toll / Your river ripple heart, soft with life / Your ancient shawl of sigh on strife / And didn’t see / San Antonio, / They called you Lazy.” But the city wins the battle and the people’s heart. Tafolla has faith in this land, this river. In “Feeding You” she gets some help from the sacred river.

Jim Daniels’s new book of short fiction, *Eight Mile High*, collects a series of short stories told in the first and third persons that recall scenes from the narrator’s youth, from “Pearl Diving” to “Raccoon Heaven.” As always, Daniels’s prose is rich in delightful sentences in which imagination turns into prose and poetry. The connection between characters and places draws the reader’s attention and ignites curiosity. The scenes are familiar places: garages, schools, local bars, and restaurants.

Daniels has been teaching creative writing (poetry, fiction, and screenwriting) at Carnegie Mellon University since 1981. A prolific author, his three recently published books—Birth Marks, a book of poetry (2013); Having a Little Talk with Capital P Poetry (2011); and Trigger Man, a short fiction collection (2011)—are only a few of his numerous published works. Daniels is a popular instructor at Chautauqua Institution, where he enjoys a large group of followers (including myself) who have benefited from his wise and practical instruction.

Daniels begins “ET TU” like this: “In the way of teenagers worldwide, I both hated my parents and loved my parents.” He goes on to describe the world as smelling “like cold church on a weekday morning.” In one section of the story, among the “13 ways of looking at” his father, he compares him to a great chess player, yet with the poker face of a man with a losing hand. The beautiful prose continues: “We waited through dusk and into darkness for him to come home. Home, we mourned like wind. This is exactly how I felt about my father and home when I was at this similar age. Yes, as in ‘Pearl Diving’ the street was our summer camp.”

Then we read a passage more like a lyrical poem than prose, reminiscent of “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks: “We broke things, we set things on fire, we blew things up, we killed bugs and rodents, we brawled and connection between the characters and places mauled, we cussed and dis-cussed at the volume of low-flying aircraft. We made trouble.” As in his other work, Daniels’s characters wander Detroit, where even a small strip of greenery becomes a hideout for mystery and mayhem. As he says earlier, “We made trouble.” However, these characters are happy kids who do not feel sorry for themselves, even when they stumble. They only live and fill their sometime vacuous summer days. In “13-Part Story with Mime,” the narrator enters college and begins living in Toledo, meeting artists, and he falls in love. He writes, “She said something about Monet vs. Manet like it was a Big Time Wrestling match, or maybe I was projecting.” The love stories in this collections are subtle and moving. In this story, learning how to scrape leaves of artichokes is a metaphor. The narrator writes about hunger and love: “I think she loved my hunger for her.” The proverb says that history repeats itself. This is at least true in Daniels’s last story. Now a father, he writes, “Today I lie on my son’s mattress— his father’s, yet with the poker face of a man with a losing hand. The beautiful prose continues: “We waited through dusk and into darkness for him to come home. Home, we mourned like wind. This is exactly how I felt about my father and home when I was at this similar age. Yes, as in ‘Pearl Diving’ the street was our summer camp.”

As in his other works, Daniels shows in *Eight Mile High* the power of imagination and tells stories rich with beautiful composition and poetic lines. Thanks to his eidetic memory, Daniels draws pictures of his own past (presumably) with such vivid descriptions that the reader walks the same path.

Voices de la Luna, 15 July 2014 11
Lavando la Dirty Laundry
by Natalia Treviño
Reviewed by Mo H Saidi

Writing about Natalia Treviño’s recently published book of poetry, Lavando la Dirty Laundry, Sandra Cisneros noted, “This writer warns us, she is a woman like a ‘Mexican electric fence.’” Yet knowing Treviño’s amicable demeanor and gentle approach to semantics, I believe the fire in her heart ignites the powerful narrative that reflects the poet’s strong personal feelings.

Born in Mexico City, Treviño grew up in Texas and became a naturalized U.S. citizen at the age of fifteen after living in San Antonio since the age of four. Immersing herself in reading and writing during her adolescence, she later graduated from the University of Nebraska’s MFA program in creative writing in 2010. Beyond her work as a well-respected educator, Treviño has published fiction and poetry in literary journals and anthologies to high praise. Lavando la Dirty Laundry mirrors the author’s transformation from a Mexican bride to a Texas transplant who attains peace on the shores of her adopted state, a second marriage, and the joy of watching her child slide down a water chute: “At the beach we let waves crash over our heads / spindling our son between our wrists.” The personal poems in the book tell the story of a woman undeterred by adversity who considers setbacks in personal life merely unavoidable experiences from which she can learn, move on, grow, and start anew. The positive message of the book is heartwarming. From the austere bridal suite in the early pages, comparable to Penelope’s waiting for Ulysses, to her description of pregnancy, the images are beautiful and the message exhilarating: “Mother and child, all moist air now, all in the quiet / fog behind a steady rush of the waterfall they formed.” Storytelling has been the essence of poetry from ancient times, when Homer told the Iliad and Ferdowsi wrote Shahnameh to narrate the history of the Persian kings. Here we are reading a modern story in lyrical poems that describe how a proud woman crosses the border and reaches a plateau, a platform which allows her to describe personal events, in courageous words and beautiful poems, as she struggles successfully to manage her family and her life.

Remembering Gabriel García Márquez
(1927-2014)
Adapted from nytimes.com and The New York Times Book Review

Best known for his celebrated novels and especially his masterpiece One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel García Márquez died on Thursday, 17 April, at his home in Mexico City. He was 87. Márquez, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982, wrote fiction rooted in a mythical Latin American landscape of his own creation, but his appeal was universal. His books were translated into dozens of languages. He was among a select roster of canonical writers—Dickens, Tolstoy, and Hemingway among them—who were embraced both by critics and by a mass audience. “Each new work of his is received by expectant critics and readers as an event of world importance,” the Swedish Academy of Letters said in awarding him the Nobel.

García Márquez was a master of the literary genre known as magical realism, in which the miraculous and the real converge. In his novels and stories, storms rage for years, flowers drift from the skies, tyrants survive for centuries, priests levitate, and corpses fail to decompose. And, more plausibly, lovers rekindle their passion after a half-century apart.

García Márquez was born in Aracataca, a small town near Colombia’s Caribbean coast, on 6 March 1927. His father—a postal clerk, telegraph operator, and itinerant pharmacist—could barely support his wife and twelve children; Gabriel, the eldest, spent his early childhood living in the large, ramshackle house of his maternal grandparents. The house influenced his writing. It seemed inhabited, he said, by the ghosts his grandmother conjured in the stories she told. He read intensely. The Americans Hemingway, Faulkner, Twain, and Melville and the Europeans Dickens, Tolstoy, Proust, Kafka, and Virginia Woolf were his favorite authors. He was less impressed by Western Europe than many Latin American writers, who looked to the Old World as their cultural fountainhead. His dispatches often reflected his belief that Europeans were patronizing toward Latin America, even though their own societies were in decline.

García Márquez alternated between journalism and fiction in the late 1950s. A newspaper series on a sailor lost at sea for ten days was later published in book form as The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor. While working for newspapers and magazines in Venezuela, he wrote a short-story collection, Big Mama’s Funeral, which is set in Macondo and incorporates the kind of magical elements he would master in One Hundred Years of Solitude. From 1959 to 1961 he supported the Castro revolution and wrote for Prensa Latina, the official Cuban press agency. In 1961 he moved to Mexico City, where he would live on and off for the rest of his life. It was there, in 1965, after a four-year dry spell in which he wrote no fiction, that García Márquez began One Hundred Years of Solitude. The inspiration for it, he said, came to him while he was driving to Acapulco.

García Márquez never claimed to have invented magical realism. He pointed out that elements of it had appeared before in Latin American literature. But no one before him had used the style with such artistry, exuberance, and power. Magical realism would soon inspire writers on both sides of the Atlantic, most notably Isabel Allende in Chile and Salman Rushdie in Britain. In the New Times Book Review, Salman Rushdie writes, “The extraordinary worldwide attention paid to the death of Gabriel García Márquez, and the genuine sorrow felt by readers everywhere at his passing, tells us that the books are still very much alive.” For more on Gabriel García Márquez, please go to www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/books/review/gabriel-garcia-marquez, or watch youtu.be/ayCyrEXlA8U.
Maya Angelou: An American Original (1928-2014)

Living is an art. We take the raw materials of time, talent and opportunity and struggle to make a life that’s remembered and cared about, trying to create a masterpiece. Few lives have been as defined by the act of creating as that of Maya Angelou. There are the books of memoirs, poetry, essays and cooking and for children: there are the plays written and acted in; the screenplays for television and the big screen, some of which she directed; the dancing done on stage; the presidential inaugural poem she wrote and read; the songs written and sung; the movie scores she’s composed; even the time she conducted the Boston Pops Orchestra.—Cary Clack, San Antonio Express-News, 2010

Maya Angelou, born Marguerite Annie Johnson on 4 April 1928, in St. Louis, MO, rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most celebrated and esteemed literary figures of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Author of seven autobiographies, including I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, which chronicles her life to age seventeen, Angelou began her professional career as a dancer and singer, performing in Porgy and Bess and producing an album of calypso music in 1957.

In 1959 Angelou moved to New York City, where she joined the Harlem Writers Guild and began her writing career. She supported the American Civil Rights movement, serving as Northern Coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She was also involved in pro-Castro and anti-apartheid activism. She was friends with many notable figures from the 1960s onward, including Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, and Oprah Winfrey.

In addition to her autobiographies, Angelou was a prolific poet. When she read her poem “On the Pulse of the Morning” at President Bill Clinton’s inauguration in 1993, she became the first poet to read at an inaugural event since Robert Frost at President Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961. She began writing poetry as a means of coping with being raped as a girl, and her verse gave her voice during a five-year period of silence following her assault. Her first book of poetry, Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘fore I Diiie (1971) was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2011.

Educator, civil rights leader, memoirist, poet, and inspiration to multitudes of men and women, Angelou overcame early tragedy and emerged as the voice of America. How did she do it? She tells us in this excerpt from her poem “Still I Rise.”

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Lost Tolkien Tape Discovered

www.huffingtonpost.com/noble-smith/jrr-tolkien-reveals-the-t_b_3373329.html

On 28 March 1958, J. R. R. Tolkien was invited to visit Rotterdam for a “Hobbit Dinner,” sponsored by the Dutch publisher of his works. At the dinner, Tolkien read a poem in the Elven tongue (a language of his own creation) that has never been published, and he also revealed the true meaning of The Lord of the Rings. Unfortunately for both Tolkien scholars and amateur Tolkien aficionados, both the poem and Tolkien’s authoritative interpretation of his own work were lost—or at least, like the One Ring of Power, everyone assumed that they were.

In 1993 an inhabitant of Rotterdam discovered a reel-to-reel tape of Tolkien’s entire speech from the Hobbit Dinner in a basement, but until recently, he was the only person who had heard it. Eventually word got out of the existence of the recording, and the owner, René van Rossenberg, who owns a Tolkien-themed shop in Leiden, was persuaded to share his recording with the world. It is currently being remastered and is scheduled for release this fall.

Tolkienian Runic Extensions to Unicode

The Unicode Consortium has just announced the addition of 2834 new characters to the Unicode code charts, the list of characters that can be displayed by properly configured computer programs and web browsers. Among those additional characters are three runes invented by Tolkien and used in his works, including on the title page to The Hobbit (see above).

Ulysses (excerpt)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Soul that have toil’d, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
’T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and tho’
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
On 15 May 2014, Gallery Nord, the contemporary art gallery, and *Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine*, presented an evening of poetry, music, and book signings, topped off with a wine reception. San Antonio’s current poet laureate, Laurie Ann Guerrero, and inaugural poet laureate, Carmen Tafoya, headlined the evening. There were also presentations by Bryce Milligan, publisher of Wings Press, who performed two tone-poems and recited poetry; Sheila Black, executive/artistic director of Gemini Ink, who read selections of her poems; and Mo H Saidi, who read from his latest book, *Between A and Z* (Wings Press, 2014). The event was underwritten by Gallery Nord and *Voices de la Luna*.

**San Antonio—The Saga**
youtu.be/sB-BEB-kH5k

French artist Xavier de Richemont is the mastermind behind a unique outdoor art installation that projects a video history of the city of San Antonio onto the façade of the downtown San Fernando Cathedral, the oldest church in Texas. The work, sponsored by the Main Plaza Conservancy, with the permission of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, uses a technique called video mapping to use every square inch of the front of the cathedral as a “canvas” for the twenty-four minute presentation.

Born in Algeria in 1959, Richemont is renowned as a painter and conceptual artist. Over the past several years he has displayed his video installations in many places around the globe, including France, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Mexico.

*San Antonio Saga I* is scheduled to be presented every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday night for the next ten(!) years.

---

**Youth Poems**

**Cracks of My Mother**

*Courtney Collins*

With a creak I open the cupboard, shelves over-crowded, a sense of chaotic organization, meet my gaze
In a musty corner towards the back a mug, blue and white swirled, is pulled Porcelain, very fine, the inside stained a brownish tint from continued use of one now gone

one packet of sugar
one splash of half and half
one splash of creamer

From the stand I pull the coffee, the aroma rich and bold Steaming black brew flows mixing the contents with a hiss I bring the mug to my lips and taste the creamy liquid, warmth traveling through my body

Blue and white

Splinter across

the floor

liquid scalding through my clothes splashing to my feet Stunned I stand unbelieving the connection to one lost broken

---

**Lonely**

*Aidan Cole Graves*

When you are lonely
You will eat without taste
You will feel without feeling
You will see without seeing
You will cry without tears
You will talk without a voice
And slowly you start to understand
When you are lonely you only have you to hate,
But try not to forget that there’s a world to love.
Connections Die
Anastasia S. Hejduk

Open windows,
Sound vibration.
Simple connection.

Hands touch,
Tiny smirk.
Passing connection.

Brushing lips,
Whisper no.
Forced connection.

Stepping timeline,
Bumping together.
Accidental connection.

Connections die,
Some linger.
All end.

Thank You, Mom
Nabiha Zaman

Your eyes flutter with passion
a solitude affection
Happiness is painted all over your soul even your shadows smile
There is grace in your every step
and compassion in the palm of your hand

Your voice
is the voice of a strong confident woman who has bloomed all over the world.
Your ways have printed on me
and I never want them to wash away
You always come to dry my last tear
and when I reach out with my weak hand you’re always there to hold it
You’re always there beside me

But now, I am beside you.
No matter how fast the world blows away
before our eyes like feathers
Don’t forget to look beside you because I’ll be there loving you with all my heart
Forever.

Growing Old to Grow Young
Tabitha Baladez

Retirement Wish List

The boys and girls play innocently, not waiting for the days to pass but wishing the evenings would never come.
They tack their scabs and scrapes on a trophy wall to show how strong they truly are.
Because that’s all they need to smile; a cry from a stumble and then a battle wound to prove they lived through the day; while teenagers have something more internal.

Adults have paychecks to stick in the bank while their hands are sore from a long day at the keyboard.
What they wish for are for the evenings to start coming and days to keep passing, counting down the days until retirement.

Asleep

We really only liked sleeping inside so we could monitor each other’s breathing cycles, and make sure the other was still living.
What we forgot was, breathing wasn’t the only measure of life.
So we packed our belongings and went outside, where noises overlapped and we had to rely on only emotions to see what was going on in our hearts.

Too Long Since

It’s been years since we carved our names into the willow tree, since we let our kites fly; since we let ourselves breathe.
It’s been years since we finger painted and let naps refresh our minds with dreams that kept their promises.
And it’s been years since we let ourselves whisper softly into the night, with the fan blowing on high so the walls wouldn’t hear our secrets.
It’s been years since we cared for more than ourselves and showed others our hearts.
It’s been too long since we forgot about the time and let the days pass with sun and not with our watch.
It’s been years since we traced palms, and it’s been years since we let ourselves forgive.
Select Poems

National Poetry Month  
Fernando Esteban Flores

Praise the morning aria—April’s airy poem:

The contrapuntal “chuck-chucks” of an unknown bird passing overhead
Sparrows twittering precise needlepoint notes
A ringtail dove cooing a wounded lyric soft as a lover’s vow
Crows cackling a riot of retorts ricocheting as they fade
In a symphony of slamming doors, rumbling cars huffing off on creaky springs
The Union Pacific train trumpeting the end of sleep—a jailer
Rattling the keys of our late night revelry
Joe—at Blackie’s tire shop—torquing & untorquing tire rims
The riveting rhyme of his pneumatic drill to scale a score of flats
Hector (down the street) hacking at a home improvement job
Well before the sun is underway
St. John’s bells with exigent tremors pleading “Lazarus, ‘come forth’”
To saints and sinners
The shortening intervals between our blood beats and eternity
marking off
The cadences of the measured day

Praise the passing aria—of poetry

Ireland  
Burns Taylor

Ireland! Land of Ire.
fatherless motherland.
Plucked and plundered by those who would steal her magic.
Home of slaves who would be kings:
who would rather be happy than rich,
who would rather dance than rule.

Ireland…
Broken castles
filled with unicorns and one-armed leprechauns.
Home of Mollie Malone and Henry Parnell and Bernard Shaw, too.
Tongues that speak with drunken eloquence.
Stolen hearts that smile through tear-stained eyes.

Oh Danny Boy,
Like a motherless son,
slumming down the road,
in the company of a man-headed lion.
Slouching ever so slowly,
slouching toward….

Arriving at Pompeii  
Vincent Spina  
For Kay Fineran Luthin

The islands list behind us;
A place at the edge of language
lingers in storage that we may sit
to fatted calf parts and tacos with best friends, drinking in the wine-tossed sea at the local Mexican restaurant behind the lobby of the extended-stay motel. Except

for the loss, the meaningful waiting
with the discreet brown wrapping paper
of memory still in hand, life was not that bad. There were moments when I could think of nothing else but the regional salamis, small inlets, bays and the sea beyond. Over sweet and salty margaritas, you ask and I tell you, Pompeii is a time to be toyed with, a map of half-empty, half-filled squares filled with cracked walls, good-luck phalli and rubble along whose streets my first fantasies of Cutie and Cecilia came reborn—child’s pornography, child porn—before knowledge of sex, innocent as love—the girls continued on their quest for the perfect game of patsy, played with a hair-pin tossed into a pattern of numbered boxes chalked on the sidewalk, like a blueprint of an imagined city: a game with no endgame of streets designed for leisurely walks, fountains of pure mountain water and casual pleasure.

All the tourists had lined up speaking praise in the sincerest sentences of their respective languages, poured into a golden cup.

We followed the young docent to the Venus Gates, sea and ghosts ships listing beyond. The wine purple gulf was bluer then and much closer. Yet all was much the same: vendors both picturesque and picaresque, booklets, maps and meals on the run.

Somehow the millennia had changed us.
Somehow the port was in sight.
The uncomplicated land was in sight.
Quantum Poetics
Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

All probable futures,
all probable pasts,
exist now
in this ocean of live space.
Waves and currents
sweeping, entangling, ebbing and falling.
We make more as we go.
More than we will ever know.

Crusaders ride into Jerusalem.
Dinosaurs wage Jurassic battles.
Earthlings colonize Mars.
Rumi and Shams recite love poems.
Stars collapse into mystery.
Spirits await birth
in warm bellies.

We trace paths with conscious acts.
Write stories—
Each page a different world.
Suffer pitfalls—
Drops of rain in raging storms.
Celebrate pleasures—
Dolphins dancing calm waters.

Inner travel at superluminal speeds—
Back and forth,
in, out, and across.
Awake brain navigates
pinpoint focus.
Five senses along for the ride.

A sun shines through crimson petals.
Water trickles down limestone rocks—
Rocks formed in a distant past—
A past
we
just made
ours!

Bee Boxes
Joseph R. Trombatore

The young, tender ones emerge
2 eyes of hexagonal facets
another 3 for focusing—
waterfalls of wings
& mouths of oboes

within—
the hive hums

without—
the yellow breath of Pines
of Water Oaks
like flecks of gold leaf

a forest of catkins
fall like spent torches
matchsticks of Magnolias
strike the ground
the eyelids of orchids
are wet

the little ones are amazed
their little bodies quiver

their wings, legs anticipate
the dance, the ritual

their homes
these boxes
of white, red, & green
ignite
with flashing spasms of gold

White River Repose
Kenneth E. Hada

In a thirty dollar hotel room
one night by the White River
after hard fishing in winter wind

we read Walt Whitman aloud,
pausing now and again to discern
the Muse listening close, old

lines echoing off torn yellow walls,
wear carpet, a brown table,
particle board dressers and lumpy

mattresses with stained pillows.
“Song of the Open Road” follows us
home—like fallow fields at dusk.

Stone Haiku
Sarah Munley

If I were a stone
I’d be a ruby, flashing
magenta light beams.
Poemas Internacionales

Tarde en el hospital
Carlos Pezoa Veliz

Sobre el campo el agua mustia
cae fina, grácil, leve;
con el agua cae angustia:
llueve

Y pues solo en amplia pieza,
yazgo en cama, yazgo enfermo,
para espantar la tristeza,
duermo.

Pero el agua ha lloriqueado
junto a mí, cansada, leve;
despierto sobresaltado:
llueve

Entonces, muerto de angustia
ante el panorama inmenso,
mientras cae el agua mustia,
pienso.

Agua
Gabriela Mistral

Hay países que yo recuerdo
como recuerdo mis infancias.
Son países de mar o río,
de pastales, de vegas y aguas.
Aldea mía sobre el Ródano,
rendida en río y en cigarras;
Antilla en palmas verdi-negras
que a medio mar está y me llama;
¡roca lígure de Portofino,
mar italiana, mar italiana!

Me han traído a país sin río,
tierras-Agar, tierras sin agua;
Saras blancas y Saras rojas,
donde pecaron otras razas,
de pecado rojo de atridas
que cuentan gredas tajeadas;
que no nacieron como un niño
con unas carnazones grasas,
cuando las oigo, sin un silbo,
cuando las cruzo, sin mirada.

International Poems

Afternoon in the hospital
Carlos Pezoa Veliz / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

Over the countryside, desolate water
falls fine, graceful, and gentle;
anguish falls with every drop:
it rains

And so, routinely,
I lie in bed, I lie sick.
To drive away the sorrow,
I sleep.

But the water has cried
with me, tired, gentle;
startled awake:
it rains

Then, dead with anguish
before the vast landscape,
while dismal water falls,
I think.

Water
Gabriela Mistral / translated by Gerard S. Robledo

There are countries that I remember
like I remember my childhood.
They are countries of sea or river,
of pastures, of meadows and water.
My village on the Rhône,
painted in river and cicadas;
Antilles wrapped in dark green palms
surrounded by sea, it calls to me;
Portofino, Ligurian rock,
the Italian sea, Italian sea!

They brought me to a country without rivers,
Agar land, land without water;
white Saras and red Saras grow,
where other races have sinned,
the red sin of Atreidai
which speak of gashed loam;
who were not born like a child
with fatty flesh,
when I hear them, I do not whistle,
when I cross them, I do not look.
Quiero volver a tierras niñas; 
llévenme a un blando país de aguas. 
En grandes pastos envejezca 
y haga al río fábula y fábula. 
Tenga una fuente por mi madre 
y en la siesta salga a buscarla, 
y en jarras baje de una peña 
un agua dulce, aguda y áspera.

Me venza y pare los alientos 
el agua acérrima y helada. 
¡Rompa mi vasó y al beberla 
me vuelva niñas las entrañas!

---

Im Gegenwind
Hejo Müller

Lebenslänglich
gelaufen—gestanden 
im Gegenwind.
Pralle Segel: 
im Tuch 
der Schrei des Aeneas: 
LOS LEUTE!

Im Stöhnen der Bäume 
wenne sie dem Sturm widerstehen 
die Klagen jener gehört 
die nie laufen lernen konnten 
deren Wurzeln 
ins Erdreich gekrallt.

Meiner Mutter 
Atem gespürt 
alas ich damals
INTERFACES ET URINAS 
da lag 
im Unschrei nach Atem ringend… 
meiner Mutter 
RUACH gespürt

Gottes Atem erkennend 
im Gegenwind

[Ruach (hebr.) = Atem, Hauch, Wind]
Editors’ Poems

Coca Chewer in a Quito Museum
Carol Coffee Reposa

He’s still addicted
After fifteen centuries,
His beatific gaze
Caught in time
And non-glare glass.

He cradles a small bowl
Once filled with something
Gods would want,
Absolute contentment in his eyes
That tell-tale lump in his jaw

Like a big-league pitcher
Focused on a perfect point
Beyond the catcher
Just before
He throws another strike.

I think of vanished hands,
Careful fingers
Rounding out the terra cotta limbs
To please a pantheon
That gathered somewhere

In the sky or sun or moon.
Track lights catch
The bearer’s tranquil face, unblemished
After dusty epochs he spent buried
In the altiplano.

As we leave
I almost feel
That old ceramic bowl
In my embrace,
A tell-tale swelling in my jaw.

From Underground Musicians, Lamar University Press, 2013

Over Easy, Finally
Joan Strauch Seifert

I’m not alone, of course, in sorrow,
but coping hasn’t come, and will it ever?
Fits of fury fill my daily voids.

I read where he, too, flailed with wrath and outbursts
when his Jane died; she was so much younger—
where was the natural order?

His spells of constant downness maddened him;
to peer out a morning window was unsufferable—
How dare each dawn reveal such sparkling!

Another kind of life intruded on him now.
How to cope with challenges, small mundane things
she’d solved for him, and he so unaware?

Frying breakfast eggs, he’d never done that, really.
A different fit this time, a quieter tantrum—
where was the spatula?

And do you turn them only once, or several times?
He turned them once;
the yellows didn’t break.

Finally, a little win; she would approve!
Bright sun, have your way, then,
Rise up with cheer, at least for today!

And so I read again today, of what befell him, fore and after,
his small start, a hint, a grasp of coping.
And I seek, still, a morning like his morning.

Poet Donald Hall’s wife, poet Jane Kenyon, died at a young age; he
struggled with grief, and his poetry prompted those with sorrow of their
own to write as liberation.

Mayan Princess
James R. Adair
To Viviana, and countless others

“Don’t stare at me because I’m dark,
for the sun has cast its gaze on me.” (Cant 1:6)

You stand at the back of the crowd,
head bowed, self-conscious smile covering capricious teeth,
aware of your tousled hair,
your soiled dress, your sun-baked skin.

But your dancing eyes take in the scene,
honey-obsidian flashing luminaries,
drawing the gazes of all around,
for your stately grace transcends your imperfections.

Rather, they transform you from ordinary
to mesmerizing, transfixing,
the prow of your pate, your prominent nose,
your elegant curves and defiant spirit.

You think of yourself as invisible, a cipher,
paling in worth before the foreign visitors to your village,
but in truth you are an imposing vision, a Mayan princess,
daughter of jaguar gods and plumed serpents, apotheosis of
beauty.
Select Poems

Lambent Astronomy
Wendy Thornton

There must be something about a tilting neck that cuts off the flow of blood to the brain. Mayan codices predict astronomical events so well the Europeans burn their books. On the Great Plains, medicine wheels point to the summer solstice and chart the rising stars, Aldebaran, Rigel and Sirius. Their descendants howl at a moon they no longer fathom.

Tycho Brahe gives up law to study the firmament, loses his nose in a foolish duel, refuses to put down the wine till his body bursts like a crashing comet. Copernicus gives up God to worship the sun, cradling Commentariolus on his deathbed. Galileo swings like a pendulum—“It moves, it doesn’t, nevertheless.” Earth stops turning at his recantation, poor feeble man, who can’t recall the dictates against him but creates a dialogue between planet and star. Kepler plots a trinity of laws, faster and closer, while defending his mother the witch. Distraught hunters, we shoot arrows at Mars who swallows them, laughing.

Hear how the snap of camera shutters obscures the coming dawn, the clicking of crickets on Salisbury Plain.

In Dictionaries
Robert Allen

Each word swims a swirling sea, like a gnat in a cloud before rain, begins to knit relationships, with more words—like a nit among nits on a child’s head of hair, not easy to disentangle—spawns a net of meanings, allusions, and sounds, which knot the throat searching for origins, a neat ordered guess, somehow, in a cryptic note while humans speak, write, cogitate, and night descends. The word grows legs, like a fire newt under wood or stone, slithers past the nut of revelation, to rejuvenate like sunrise on the tongue of any Nat or Nancy, as language: impure, innate.

What I Now Know
Alan Berecka

What did I know, what did I know…
Those Winter Sundays, Robert Hayden

We sat for a moment on the metal bench just this side of security. Her final Christmas break over, my daughter held on to her photo i.d. and boarding pass with a diamond adorned hand.

We made small talk when the notion swept over me like a black wave—she would not return to be home ever again. All my past disappointments revisited me. They poked at bruises and scars as we stood to hug. The embrace returned me to the side of my mother’s cancer ward bed. My spring break over, I stood to return to my school life, my wife and our infant daughter. My mother reached up and draped her arms around my neck. She pulled me down toward her with more strength than I thought she had left. I echoed her affection and returned her kiss.

I regained my balance in time to watch my daughter merge into the line of departing passengers.

Why I Went to College
Shinji Mimura

Is a question continually perplexed by the answer Vexing armies of rag-tag technicians fix bleeding hearts and “too free” souls: progenitors of bad poetry. Stream-of-consciousness inserts are merely Hercules beetles, using arbitrary horns as vices, become deluged by sarcasm, the gossamer phantom of unknown intrigue. Three Right-over-wrong poets casting insults to Uncle Whitman and Papa Thoreau, /but surely the merit is self-evident and holds weight over content/, “Collegiate existence remains questioned, my focus causing remiss emotions” ---------------------------------------yet compulsion for completion remains intact.

# > 3

Form broken and shed, pen matches conviction and flits hummingbirdly away from hierarchy.
The Poet and the Artist Compete

Martha Grant

My two muses are jealous stepsisters, escapees from an obscure fairy tale, vying for the starring role in my creative life.

When one is in residence, having bolted the lock behind her on entering, she commands my rapt attention to her flirtation or outright seduction. But the other pouts on the studio porch, pacing, chain smoking, rattling the door handle, making faces in the windows.

Some days they stand at a collaborative impasse, shoulder to shoulder in the door frame blocking the light, sturdy arms folded across stubborn chests, the paint-spattered artist smock and the ink-stained poet shirt hanging limp and lifeless on a single peg in the back of the closet.

The Traveler’s Life

Jasmina Wellinghoff

I wonder if I could refer to memory as my country; it has borders of sorts, splendid landscapes and I visit often. Or maybe my solitude, with its walls and inner rebellions?

People ask, Where are you from? From a place that no longer exists, I should say, and from other places that have changed. I have traveled in life, carried countries like luggage. Some became old, one was stolen from me, some are forgotten.

I am from here, I say, just to feel like I belong but they don’t believe me. So I amuse them with stories.

Still they insist, Where’s home? Home? Home, my friends, is a deception invented to reassure. I prefer not to be deceived.

Indifference

Harold Rodinsky

The last bottle of Sweet Tokay was gone hours ago and the morning was cold. This day would be no different than uncounted days that came before.

It was too early to start panhandling but the Union Gospel Mission was open for breakfast with compliance prayers. Listening to prayers was a small price to pay for oatmeal and hot coffee and perhaps a shower and some clean clothes if he got there early enough. Searching around in empty pockets for a cigarette butt he found a dime, the day was off to a good start but he really needed a smoke. Pushing his cardboard-box-lean-to to the side he got up and ran his fingers through his hair trying to get it out of his eyes.

There weren’t any mirrors or a sink under the railroad trestle. He hid his duffle bag behind some pilings and began walking up the bank. When he got to the top he could see the Steel Bridge. Then memory took over and he saw his parents’ house beyond the bridge; his mom was standing at the stove cooking breakfast, scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, his dad hiding behind morning paper, smoke curling up and over the sports section; occasionally a hand would reach out to grab his coffee or orange juice. Next to the newspaper he saw an empty place at the table, his place.

He shook off the images and turned up the street towards the mission.

Molting

jo reyes-boitel

between night clothes, folded socks—his undershirts still carry the scent, orange water and mint

he wore them, my grandfather, those starchy translations. with his heart slowing. Those shirts were folded into a yellowed box and passed to me

the day he died, one shirt slid across my shoulders, rolled up my stomach, unwilling to stay tucked

I hung it on the bathroom door that night to document the year I would live in those shirts, walking as a ghost, speaking only to save my life.
Rapid Reaction
Lauren Walthour
To D. H. Lawrence in response to “Snake”

I know about the kingly snake
And how much they are like man
So, I revere them in their place
And chastise Lawrence’s hand.

For shame, you should strike a late blow
Or fear what others may think:
For Christ and cow both wait their turns
To take a much needed drink,

Without bad intent or motion,
Despite what the devil may say
For every creature deserves peace
And water to make his way

Home to the darkness below us
Or into heavenly light,
So D. H., I am glad you learned
And shared what you knew was right.

Snake
D. H. Lawrence

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over
the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, if you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.
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.

The Day of Rain
Marisol Macías

Helios scorned us for an ancient wrongdoing
from fathers long ago
lying lost in secret tombs

our lips charmed soon after birth
with blessings from cicadas
baptized in their canticle of death

we sing, unknowing of our calling
oracles marked to cry
when the thirst from the land
chastised our feet

cracked caliche
hot coals and razor blades

horned lizards hang on mesquite branches by acolyte children
praying chants to sky gods for rain
whispered from ear to ear to ear to ear
by river born grandmothers
half-wild sage roses

we turn
pinwheel dervishes
our pleas clinging to tattered feathers
of antediluvian winds

it is done!
it is done!
the parched yellow earth swells and blooms
sweet petrichor
rain cools my face

A Place
Donald Farr

A place of hope
A place of calm
A place of peace
A place of shelter
A place of rest
A place that’s best
A place to hide
A place to decide
Home is this place and will be for a long, long time.

I Hear Her Weeping
Peter Holland

She weeps.
I seek to wipe the tears,
but I am unable.
Her tears wash me away,
am I drowning?
I am her child,
fruit from the very tree
which sits feebly weeping,
is this rot in me too,
is this a mirror I look into,
is this me,
confident and strong
going to wither into tears?

Untitled
Philip Trujillo

A sea of tranquility
a beacon of hope
but also pain

Sacrifice breeds renewal and privilege;
privilege to save, provide, protect, enable
The lamb gives so the lion may live
When will the lion lie down with the lamb?

The duck among swans
a pebble in the sand
abrasive and awkward
strange and foreign;
painted faces on fallen masquerades.

The song ends
but the dancer keeps on
dancing to his own tune.

The House of Memories
Kiyoe Cook-Kroeger

Old memories about my childhood house
Like an old cottage house built below the street level
Look at the open window, I see the clear sky with lots of greenish hills
I sing a song or play a musical instrument
Then the fresh air says
“It is all right; don’t worry”
I gaze through the open window
To look upon my daydreams
Through my tears, struggles and accomplishments
So thank you, house
Garbage Man
Tom Keene
for Rick Crocker

Crazy white boy
wild ass redneck
pitchin' garbage cans aroun'
workin' like us, black an brown.

Hundred houses,
four, five cans each,
forty, fifty pounds a can,
call'n you: pussy? or man?

Hundred times four
times fifty pounds:
twenty thousand pounds a day,
tempts you to say, ain't no way.

Like most of us,
for breakfast at
any ice house we get near,
chug-a-lugs a quart of beer.

He can take it,
he got huevos.
It don't matter that he's white.
He can work with us real tight.

He's a brother.
He's got soul.
He believes in me and you.
Ain't ashamed of what we do.

Garbage hitman.
Hauling shit-man.
Grass, booze, head like a feather.
We bust our ass together.

The last gringo like him
was five years ago,
so drunk crazy he lay down on a railroad track.
Train ran over him.
Never saw him again.

Funeral Dirge
Milo Kearney

Walking amidst the graves
of murder victims,
we have good reason to mourn.

How lively they bustled,
laughing and chattering,
in the very recent past.

The tomb inscriptions
announce their names:
Detroit, Kansas City, Matamoros.

And the assassin slinks away,
his name unspoken
due to an ideological taboo.

Glass Walls
Janie Alonso

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

My “New” Voice
Jonah Ball

There was something
new, unused
I stopped to stare
day to day
It grew stronger
fed by hope
I was led to ponder
the origin of this quiet song
Familiar melody?
No, 'tis wrong.
This song was mine
from the very start
The song was my,
my hidden heart.

House of Hearts
Mike Gilliam

39 years strong
Love professed remains
Respect dominates relationship
Work, work and more work
Accomplishments abound
Caring for other always
Open Hearts and Hands
Tom E.

God whispers softly in my heart
The humdrum of the world drowns him out
When I seek Him I can’t find Him
For like “The tree for the forest” He’s all about

Some say that they speak for him
And they do speak very loud
They pray to Him with arms stretched out wide
And not with heads humbly bowed

I hear God in the soup kitchen
And wherever you find a helping hand
God’s work isn’t conquering by proselytizing
It’s where compassion makes a stand.

Not Dead
Amanda Hernandez

Let down defenses.
Break down walls.
Those insecurities are nothing
The hurt, the pain, the sorrows, the defeats
are nothing—compared to love.
Love, compassion, empathy are the lights
of life.
Show them.
Teach them.
Be them.

“Kindness is not a dead art.
It is not Latin.”
Drop some truth—let us hear it.
“Kindness is not dead.”

Art Therapy
Memories
Maripat Munley

memories both old and new
come with ripe feelings
sharpening our present senses
hear, touch, see, taste, feel
our senses evoke
bygone ages and places
we hear voices that bring us
both laughter and tears
visits from those who formed us
memories jolt us alive
to who we were then
and how we became ourselves

Through My Eyes
Richelle Howard Vasquez

I’ve seen so much in my time
The good, the bad; births and deaths;
The heartaches and pain
The joy and happiness.
Nobody understands the trauma,
The stress and anxiety that I’ve lived through.
Not a soul witnessing what I’ve seen
Through my eyes.
Nobody cares to share the blessings,
The excitement and love that I’ve experienced.
No one enjoying what I have seen
Through my eyes.
The rejections, assaults, and lies
The aggression, frustration, anger, and rage
The hatred, beatings, and back stabbings
The murders, the rapes, and blood spilled—innocently
Nobody has ever seen
Through my eyes.
The birthdays, weddings, and baptisms
The finding of old friends and family reunions
The first days of school, new friends made, and communion
The first love, school proms, and graduations
Nobody cares to see
Through my eyes
God, I pray that someday
People will soon be able to understand
What I have survived … and sympathize
God, grant them the ability
To see what I have seen
Through my eyes.

Galaxies
Siara Foster

I miss you so much, I miss your voice, your smile, your touch.
I miss all the things we used to do.
I miss just lying next to you.
I miss waking up in your arms.
I miss feeling protected like I was safe from any harm.
I miss the love we used to share.
Now you are a figment of my imagination.
Were you even there?
When I think about you I tend to cry.
I don’t understand why you had to die
when our life was finally getting good,
when I gave everything I could.
I still stand here loving you with all of my heart
no matter how many galaxies keep us apart.
R. I. P. Shuwayne, I love you.
Poetry & Dreams
Poetry, Dreams, and Interpretation

A House in Iraq
Terry L. Braddock, Command Sergeant Major (Retired),
U.S. Army

Dream: I am in a house and I can’t find my way out. Reaching, touching, seeing, and nothing seems to help. Many places to hide, behind doors, inside closets, under beds, and yes, even under stairwells. They are in the shadows. The path is clear, and all I have to do is connect to myself and accept. But I don’t want to, because if I do, I’ll be lost forever. I want both. It is a part of me, and I don’t want to forget. This is my recurring dream—‘A House in Iraq,’ as explained in-depth below.

A house in Iraq
Clearing houses of known enemies. Breach front door, get into the house without getting compromised; you can’t leave the house until the house is free and clear of the enemy.

Reaching, touching, seeing
It is all part of searching the house. I am using all of my senses when searching this house. My training has taught me the enemy can hide in many places. I must be aware of that. I cannot be surprised. I must be prepared. If I am surprised, then those seconds can cost me or my team our lives. I must kill him before he kills me.

The path is clear
Just because what I see in front of me in this house may be clear doesn’t make it so. I must use caution. If I assume everything is clear, it could very well cost me my life.

Connect to myself and accept
I must stay focused. I must stay on point. I must do the job I was trained to do.

Accept
I accept that I am in this house, whether I want to be there or not. I am here. I have a job to do. I must do it. I must accept the danger. It could cost me my life. I accept that. It is part of the job.

But I don’t want to, because if I do, I’ll be lost forever
It is the dream. I don’t want to have these recurring dreams. But I know if I don’t accept them I will be separated from both worlds, and I don’t want to do that. I will be in a fourth dimension floating forever. No purpose. No past. No present. No future. A black hole. Never ending.

I want both
It is a part of me and I don’t want to forget. I have accepted that the house will always be a part of me for the rest of my life… I will never forget… I have made peace in the house. I have accepted what I went through in the house. I accept, I have PTSD.

San Antonio Spurs: The Beautiful Game
youtu.be/aPaH44ISY20, youtu.be/tNZvNs6r800

It wasn’t long ago that the San Antonio Spurs were derided as a team that was boring, that was too old to win an NBA Championship. Tim Duncan and Manu Ginóbili were over 35, ancient in basketball terms, Tony Parker was past his prime, and the rest of the team was a collection of misfits and role players who couldn’t make other teams’ rosters. Boris Diaw was even cut from the Charlotte Bobcats, the worst team in the league, before San Antonio picked him up. Yet as the Big Three age, the Spurs keep changing to adapt to their players’ abilities, and they keep winning. And they do so as a team, leading the league in assists, in bench minutes, and in the all-important +/- stat. To put it simply, they play a beautiful game of basketball, and now they’re NBA champions for the fifth time in fifteen years. So congratulations to the San Antonio Spurs, who have proved that Keats was right: “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”
As the nascent abstract art movement gained momentum among New York artists during the 1930s, Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb founded the Ten, a group of abstract painters who exhibited together until 1940. This action anticipated the realignment of the avant-garde art world which occurred after World War II; by the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the revolutionary American Abstract Expressionist Movement was wresting the center of leading-edge artistic expression from Paris to New York City.

The Philosophy Undergirding Abstract-Expressionism

At first the Abstract-Expressionist movement barely was conceived, much less named. In June of 1943, however, Rothko and Gottlieb—as leaders of the abstractionists—wrote a brief manifesto, laying out the tenets of their philosophy in a letter to the art editor of the New York Times. Rothko and Gottlieb stipulated: “We favor the simple expression of complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.” This brief statement caused a furor in the art world.

Shortly after this letter to the Times was published, abstract artists Dorothy Dehner and her husband David Smith “bumped into Markus Rothkowitz, and had a soda with him on Madison Avenue.” Russian-born Rothkowitz (later shortened to Mark Rothko) was one of Smith’s W.P.A. associates. The two had worked together on New York City mural projects during the Great Depression, and Rothko later socialized with Dehner and Smith when he vacationed during 1930s summers in the Adirondacks. Rothko and his wife Edith Sachar rented an abandoned schoolhouse on Trout Lake in the Adirondacks, just “over the hill” from the Smiths’ Bolton Landing farmhouse.

Over their ice cream sodas at Scrafft’s that autumn evening, Rothko no doubt discussed with Dehner and Smith the aims of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, an organization which had held its third annual exhibition on June 2, 1943, at Wildenstein’s Gallery on 54th Street. Its accompanying brochure reads like a manifesto calling for an end to “artistic nationalism” to be supplanted by expression of “cultural values on a truly global plane.” They sought to paint in an idiom capable of being understood internationally, thus proclaiming the core value of the Abstract Expressionist movement.

Rothko and Gottlieb contended that any explanation of their paintings had to come “out of a consummated experience between picture and onlooker.” In other words, if the viewer did not experience the paintings emotionally, no amount of critical verbiage could help. They wrote in their introductory statement: “Art is an adventure into an unknown world,” and that, to understand it, the viewer had to take risks.

This “world of the imagination” which abstract art explored was not bound by common sense, and the abstractionists chose “to make the spectator see the world” their way and not his way. In terms of presentation, the Federation rejected Renaissance perspective, designed to present a three-dimensional world realistically on a two-dimensional picture plane, in favor of “flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.” That statement negated 500 years of established art history. Artists including Rothko—emotionally distraught over rumors of the Nazis’ persecution of the Jews and Hitler’s invasion of most of Europe—thought that the only valid subject matter was “tragic and timeless” and therefore sought a “spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art.” They wanted to commune with the viewer without benefit of clergy/critics. Nothing should come between their paintings and the viewer.

In their letter to the Times, Rothko and Gottlieb could not resist taking to task viewers who were “spiritually attuned to interior decoration.” They castigated private collectors who bought “pictures for the home; pictures for over the mantle; pictures of the American scene; social pictures; purity in art; prize-winning potboilers; the National Academy [sic], the Whitney Academy [sic], the Corn Belt Academy; buckeyes, trite tripe, etc.”

In that single statement, Rothko and Gottlieb managed to insult the Abstract-Expressionist movement barely was conceived, much less named. In June of 1943, however, Rothko and Gottlieb—as leaders of the abstractionists—wrote a brief manifesto, laying out the tenets of their philosophy in a letter to the art editor of the New York Times. Rothko and Gottlieb stipulated: “We favor the simple expression of complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.” This brief statement caused a furor in the art world.

Shortly after this letter to the Times was published, abstract artists Dorothy Dehner and her husband David Smith “bumped into Markus Rothkowitz, and had a soda with him on Madison Avenue.” Russian-born Rothkowitz (later shortened to Mark Rothko) was one of Smith’s W.P.A. associates. The two had worked together on New York City mural projects during the Great Depression, and Rothko later socialized with Dehner and Smith when he vacationed during 1930s summers in the Adirondacks. Rothko and his wife Edith Sachar rented an abandoned schoolhouse on Trout Lake in the Adirondacks, just “over the hill” from the Smiths’ Bolton Landing farmhouse.

Over their ice cream sodas at Scrafft’s that autumn evening, Rothko no doubt discussed with Dehner and Smith the aims of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, an organization which had held its third annual exhibition on June 2, 1943, at Wildenstein’s Gallery on 54th Street. Its accompanying brochure reads like a manifesto calling for an end to “artistic nationalism” to be supplanted by expression of “cultural values on a truly global plane.” They sought to paint in an idiom capable of being understood internationally, thus proclaiming the core value of the Abstract Expressionist movement.

Rothko and Gottlieb contended that any explanation of their paintings had to come “out of a consummated experience between picture and onlooker.” In other words, if the viewer did not experience the paintings emotionally, no amount of critical verbiage could help. They wrote in their introductory statement: “Art is an adventure into an unknown world,” and that, to understand it, the viewer had to take risks.

This “world of the imagination” which abstract art explored was not bound by common sense, and the abstractionists chose “to make the spectator see the world” their way and not his way. In terms of presentation, the Federation rejected Renaissance perspective, designed to present a three-dimensional world realistically on a two-dimensional picture plane, in favor of “flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.” That statement negated 500 years of established art history. Artists including Rothko—emotionally distraught over rumors of the Nazis’ persecution of the Jews and Hitler’s invasion of most of Europe—thought that the only valid subject matter was “tragic and timeless” and therefore sought a “spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art.” They wanted to commute with the viewer without benefit of clergy/critics. Nothing should come between their paintings and the viewer.

In their letter to the Times, Rothko and Gottlieb could not resist taking to task viewers who were “spiritually attuned to interior decoration.” They castigated private collectors who bought “pictures for the home; pictures for over the mantle; pictures of the American scene; social pictures; purity in art; prize-winning potboilers; the National Academy [sic], the Whitney Academy [sic], the Corn Belt Academy; buckeyes, trite tripe, etc.”

In that single statement, Rothko and Gottlieb managed to insult painters of the so-called American Scene, in particular the Regionalist Triumvirate—Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, and John Steuart Curry—as well as the Social Realists, embodied in the Ashcan School of painters including George W. Bellows, John Sloan, George Luks, and other members of The Eight. Of course, the painters to whom Rothko and Gottlieb referred were all prestigious artists, and several had been, or continued to be, instructors at the New York Art Students League—among them John Sloan, George Luks, Thomas H. Benton, and John Steuart Curry.

John and Dominique de Menil’s Move from Paris to Houston

John and Dominique de Menil lived in Paris until the Nazis’ occupation of the city in 1941. They emigrated to the United States where they settled in Houston, the headquarters of her family’s oil-services business, Schlumberger, Ltd. As collectors and connoisseurs, “They encouraged the talents of others, built lifelong partnerships, and created networks in Houston, in Paris, and in New York.” While in France, as appreciators—but not yet collectors—of the Surrealists in particular, the de Menils well understood and sympathized with “the original synthesis between the iconoclastic, anti-establishment, and anti-bourgeois tradition of Dada and Surrealist modernism that emerged after the First World War and the radically new forms of engagement developed in America by native and immigrant artists right after the Second World War.”

A post-war economy, largely dependent on the oil industry, led to the phenomenal growth of Houston—first as the center of an immense refining system for oil and natural gas, next as a producer of petrochemicals, and then as an international harbor. Houston—thought that the only valid subject matter was “tragic and timeless” and therefore sought a “spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art.” They wanted to commute with the viewer without benefit of clergy/critics. Nothing should come between their paintings and the viewer.

In their letter to the Times, Rothko and Gottlieb could not resist taking to task viewers who were “spiritually attuned to interior decoration.” They castigated private collectors who bought “pictures for the home; pictures for over the mantle; pictures of the American scene; social pictures; purity in art; prize-winning potboilers; the National Academy [sic], the Whitney Academy [sic], the Whitney Academy [sic], the Corn Belt Academy; buckeyes, trite tripe, etc.”

In that single statement, Rothko and Gottlieb managed to insult painters of the so-called American Scene, in particular the Regionalist Triumvirate—Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, and John Steuart Curry—as well as the Social Realists, embodied in the Ashcan School of painters including George W. Bellows, John Sloan, George Luks, and other members of The Eight. Of course, the painters to whom Rothko and Gottlieb referred were all prestigious artists, and several had been, or continued to be, instructors at the New York Art Students League—among them John Sloan, George Luks, Thomas H. Benton, and John Steuart Curry.

John and Dominique de Menil’s Move from Paris to Houston

John and Dominique de Menil lived in Paris until the Nazis’ occupation of the city in 1941. They emigrated to the United States where they settled in Houston, the headquarters of her family’s oil-services business, Schlumberger, Ltd. As collectors and connoisseurs, “They encouraged the talents of others, built lifelong partnerships, and created networks in Houston, in Paris, and in New York.” While in France, as appreciators—but not yet collectors—of the Surrealists in particular, the de Menils well understood and sympathized with “the original synthesis between the iconoclastic, anti-establishment, and anti-bourgeois tradition of Dada and Surrealist modernism that emerged after the First World War and the radically new forms of engagement developed in America by native and immigrant artists right after the Second World War.”

A post-war economy, largely dependent on the oil industry, led to the phenomenal growth of Houston—first as the center of an immense refining system for oil and natural gas, next as a producer of petrochemicals, and then as an international harbor. Largely due to the de Menils, Houston gradually became a cultural as well as an industrial center.

As the de Menils prospered, they shared their wealth, transforming a provincial young city into an emerging artistic community, sharing their knowledge of avant-garde European art; their refined taste; their keen, developed intellects; and their considerable organizational abilities. The de Menil Collection, with its concentrations in Greek Cycladic sculpture, African
The Inspiration for the Rothko Chapel

In 1952 the de Menils’ daughter Christophe joined her father in a visit to the Matisse Chapel in Vence, France, which perhaps inspired John de Menil to build a similar space, eventually, in Houston. The de Menils’ visionary leadership had already led them to build an extraordinarily diverse yet focused art collection; and the de Menils’ passion for civil rights and their continuing compassion for victims of oppressive governments were leading them to create an “active center of exchange for people of diverse backgrounds.” Hosting the Federation of Arts Convention at the Shamrock Hilton Hotel in 1957, for instance, the de Menils brought together artistic and literary notables Stuart Davis, Marcel and Teeny Duchamp, Meyer Shapiro, and Randall Jarrell.

Dominique de Menil’s Approach to Mark Rothko

Already owning three Rothkos, Dominique de Menil first went to the painter’s New York studio in 1959 to see the Seagram Building murals he had been commissioned to paint. Impressed, she discovered that Rothko knew architect Philip Johnson, who had collaborated with Mies van der Rohe on that project, and that it was Johnson who had approached the artist to design the interior painted panels of the Four Seasons Restaurant within the skyscraper. The de Menils originally chose Johnson as the chapel’s architect, but Rothko later dismissed him; a succession of other designers finally completed the project.

A self-taught painter, Mark Rothko spent a long career searching for universal meaning through myth and symbolic imagery, arriving at his most evolved work in New York during the 1950s, when he began to simplify forms “to create paintings of soft luminous rectangles that appear to float on a stained field.” He is renowned for his brilliantly hued non-objective paintings in which elements seem to float from the surface. As Rothko progressed in his attempt to wrench universal meaning out of his experience and thought, his palette darkened, conveying his overwhelming compassion for victims of oppressive governments, his continuing compassion for victims of oppressive governments, and his compassion for victims of oppressive governments, and his compassionate and compassionate compassion for victims of oppressive governments were leading him to create an “active center of exchange for people of diverse backgrounds.”

The Paintings

Mark Rothko’s fourteen nearly black paintings are immense panels (approximately three times Rothko’s height). From a distance Rothko’s paintings appear to be uniformly black, but upon closer examination they are subtly multi-hued, yielding passages of bluish magenta, blushing violet, blue violet, a purplish black and black itself, all of which merge into an overall effect seeming to negate color, negate vibrancy—except for the lustrous shimmer of oil paint on canvas in their centers, giving the darkest areas of the paintings light from within them—indeed, they suggest negation of all other earthly stimulation or mental concerns beyond the moment. They diminish and simultaneously surround the viewer. Contemplating the paintings and experiencing their environment, one might conclude, “You can go nowhere from here except inside yourself.” Their effect is powerful and mind-altering.

Dominique de Menil’s Response

When Rothko first showed the paintings to Dominique de Menil in his New York studio, she commented, “Gradually I began to absorb, or rather was absorbed into, an ocean of soft, velvety, purplish-black.” Years later, Dominique de Menil compared Matisse’s stained-glass windows and his ceramic murals in the Vence Chapel in France to Rothko’s paintings in terms of their spiritual associations, due in her opinion to the “opportunity for a new departure, a new direction in experimentation, enabling him [Matisse, and later Rothko] to eventually transcend the space offered to him.” That transcendence is emotional and perhaps even spiritual. But Rothko would have you decide for yourself.

Endnotes

2Ibid.
3Journal Letter from Dorothy Dehner to Lucille Corcos Levy, October-November, 1944, Dehner Papers, Correspondence, Reel D298 (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.)
5Ibid., 186. For an image of Schrafft’s at 625 Madison Avenue, where the Smiths and Rothko met, see www.whatwasthere.com/browse.aspx#!/40.763398/73.971546/id/49723/Info/details/zoom/14/.
6Breslin, 187.
7Ibid., 193.
8Ibid.
9Ibid.
You work your job to serve the public, not to get the public blown up. Timothy McVeigh’s bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in 1995 and the attack of 9/11/2001 in New York City are far in the future, but you know of Charles Whitman killing fourteen students in 1966 from the Tower at UT in Austin.

A second agitated man comes in to say his wife has cheated with his best friend. He wants to sue his now former army buddy for alienation of affection. You take him to the law book section to the left of the check-out counter. You don’t expect to find such a law, but there it is in a compact Texas statute book. The law is from the 19th century, and you’ve never heard of it being used, but at least the patron isn’t out to shoot anyone.

A third happy man comes in much later carrying a beat-up violin. He holds it up so you can see the mark inside. He thinks his violin could be a Stradivarius. Your small branch location actually contains a book of line drawings with violin-makers’ markings, and what the man has shown you matches pretty well the picture in the reference text.

You call the music department at the University of Texas and ask to speak with a violin professor. The professor says it’s standard practice to put such seals inside to suggest the violin is a copy of a famous original. “Sort like all those baseball bats that were signed ‘Ted Williams’ when I was a kid,” you say back.

“You got it,” the professor says.

You tell the man at the counter what the professor has said. It’s doubtful it’s a Stradivarius, but if he wants to check further, you give him the address and phone number of a nearby violin shop.

So now the long amazing day is done and you’re waiting at the corner for the six o’clock bus to come tooling along to pick you up and safely carry you home. You like your job. It’s interesting, and you like your fellow library personnel. You also love riding the bus. Buses are bigger and safer than cars are, plus you get to look out the window, you get study passengers, and you can read a book. Buses sure beat driving.

Why don’t more folks ride buses?

You see your bus coming down Manor from the northeast. The driver inside doesn’t look happy. You look him in the eye and he gives you a little shake of the head and then, amazingly, drives right by you.

What?!

Suddenly your Irish is up. There’s not another bus until seven.

You leap out into the street and you throw your quarters at his back. It’s a fast throw, no time to aim, but sure enough you hear a slight clink as the coins strike the back of the bus.

Suddenly the bus driver slams on the air brakes, throws open his sliding front door, and charges down the bus stairs, racing back up the street toward you. You are stunned, but sure enough you start running away. You’re carrying a pile of library books. They start to fall out of your arms, but you make it across the little bridge. You’re beyond the sidewalk now, headed across a yard, when the bus driver tackles you from behind. It’s a good tackle. He must have played high school football.

The bus driver stands up first and starts smiling. “It’s all right,” he says, and leans over to help you up. He doesn’t help you pick up the books. “You can get on the bus,” he adds. “Everything’s cool.” You start walking toward the city bus sitting right there in the middle of Manor Road. Traffic is light, and no one has come by. It’s a Sunday in April, and all day it’s looked like it is going to rain. The bus driver stays behind you, even as you climb on

Race, or …?
Chuck Taylor

Here you are, waiting at the bus stop by the small concrete bridge on Manor Road, after a ten-hour day at the Windsor Valley Branch Library in Austin, Texas. Before you locked up the place, you moved all the chairs and swept the floors, and you stirred the toner in the copy machine so people could make clean and clear copies in the morning. You turned out most of the lights at the breaker box and flipped over in the front window the “Open” sign to read “Closed.”

Yes, it has been a long day. A man came in looking for The Anarchist Bible, a large black-colored paperback that was all the rage in 1975. He said he wanted to make a bomb. You are the branch’s designated reference librarian and know the book is on the shelves, but lie and say no, the whole Austin library system doesn’t stock the book.

10Ibid., 194.
11Ibid.
13Ibid.
16Josef Helfenstein, Foreword to Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil (Menil Collection), ed. Laureen Schipsi (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010), 11.
18Josef Helfenstein, “Correspondence with Artists,” in Schipsi, Art and Activism, 185. See Roberto Matta’s 1957 untitled drawing of the interior view and courtyard of the de Menils’ 73rd Street townhouse in the twin-towered San Remo, in Schipsi, Art and Activism, fig. 14.33, 185. See also Max Ernst’s Portrait of Dominique (1934), Fig.10.3, 120. See photograph of Dominique de Menil and Max Ernst in the atrium garden of the de Menil home, Houston, 1952. See Alexander Calder’s sketch caricatures of John de Menil, 1959, and Dominique de Menil, 1964.
20Ibid., 52.
21Christophe De Menil, “Matisse’s Vence Chapel with John de Menil and Father Couturier” (photo), in Schipsi, Art and Activism, 247-248. Note: “Matisse considered the Vence Chapel his greatest achievement…” Gottschaler, 140.
22Helfenstein, 12.
23Camfield, 52.
25Ibid., 142. See Seagram Mural, Section 7, (Red on Maroon), (Tate Modern, London, 1959), (Fig. 11.3, p. 141. See also Panels I-III, (Harvard Mural Triptych, 1962), installed in the Holyoke Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, ca. 1964.
27Ibid.
28Gottschaler, 142-143.
29Clearwater, op. cit.
30See photo of Mark Rothko in his 69th Street studio mock-up of the Rothko Chapel, New York, 1965, Schipsi, 138, Fig.11.1.
31Gottschaler, 145.
32Ibid., 140.
the bus, and that makes you nervous. You take a seat right behind him.

As soon as the bus begins to roll and the front door is closed, the driver reaches under his left arm with his right, holding the wheel with his left hand, and pulls out a phone. You had no idea buses had phones. He calls the police, announcing he has “a nut on the bus,” and asks the police to meet him at the corner of Red River and Nineteenth (now Martin Luther King Boulevard).

The bus stops, and soon three Austin city police cars are parked, one in front and two in back. You get off the bus and the driver follows. You have no idea what will happen next. Will they handcuff you and take you down to Austin’s infamous city jail, where folks howl in their cells all night and everyone freezes? The bus driver’s face remains red with anger. Maybe he hates hippies and despises your long hair and beard. Could he be a Vietnam veteran? The war will be over soon, in August, when helicopters grab the last evacuees off the US Embassy roof before the Viet Cong occupy the fortress-like complex in Saigon. All this is going on before the Austin City Bus System has been modernized, re-capitalized, and professionalized with its own tax district, and renamed Capital Metro. Drivers now are held to stricter standards of conduct.

The police, however, are professional. They separate you and the driver by some twenty feet so you can’t hear each other. Two officers with each listen to your sides of the story, and one officer travels between. You are thinking on your feet here. You tell the police that you, like the bus driver, are also a city employee. You are employed by the Windsor Library Branch to handle reference questions, and you have a PhD in English. You explain you were waiting for the bus where you always wait and always get picked up, and this particular bus driver shook his head “no” and drove by you on an evening when it looked like it was about to rain.

You don’t know what the bus driver is saying about you to his two police officers, but you suspect it is not good. The policeman traveling between the two groups suddenly goes over and walks around the bus slowly, looking for marks and nicks. He puts his hands on some places. He walks around the bus twice.

Then he comes up to you and looks you straight in the eye, asking, “Did you throw a rock at the bus?”

As a kid you watched a lot of Perry Mason courtroom TV. Your answer is forthright and honest, “No, I didn’t throw a rock.” Maybe you shouldn’t have put it quite that way. You’ve provided a little hint, but the policeman doesn’t pick up on it to ask if you threw anything else at the bus.

The officer then tells you that the bus driver is considering suing you, through the bus system, for damaging city property. Still thinking fast, you tell the officer that you are going to sue the driver and bus system for public assault and injury. Your back now hurts, you lie.

The officer pauses, thinks for a moment, and then gets on the city bus to interview the riders and get their testimony about what happened. At this moment you think your goose is cooked.

You got on the bus in a black area of Manor Road. The bus driver is black. All the riders on the bus are black. You are the only white person. The riders are going to side with the driver, out of racial loyalty. Yes, your goose is cooked.

The officer gets off the bus and comes up to you, “They all told me he drove by you. They even heard him curse,” the officer says. “They also said he tackled you on the ground.”

“OK,” you say, relieved. And you are amazed: your fellow rid-
The Fishman

Holly Rice

The river was long and narrow, shallow enough for Laurel to walk through without worrying about water slapping higher than her ankles. It pushed against her skin, nipped at her flesh, wove around her ankle bones and held her like a tether. The security was usually a comfort, but today, wiggling her toes against the smooth stones underneath the water’s surface, comfort seemed to slip away with the current.

The girl didn’t think much about her face; it was like any ordinary face. Looking more closely at her reflection, however, she couldn’t help but recall the words of the other girls. Words like “lopsided” and “bespeckled” collided with words like “wide,” “crooked,” and “bulging” until they all molded into Laurel. “Are you all right, Lovely?”

She turned. The Fishman, sitting relaxed against a rock further down, was grinning at her. Perfectly proportioned and devilishly handsome, Laurel knew no one had ever insulted his appearance, something she could not say about her own.

She had met The Fishman back when she was only five, lost among the trees and adding tears into the river. A fish had found her, then two, then three, and soon the man came and offered her a friendly face and guided her home.

As she grew older she began to visit him, running along the outskirts of the village and finding a friend in the man who walked across the shallows of the water with minnows kissing his heels and trout waiting for him by the banks. The Fishman became his title.

“Yeah,” Laurel sighed. “No, maybe. I don’t know.”

His eyes, silver like scales, stared at her curiously. They were welcoming, imploring, and Laurel couldn’t help but to oblige as his index finger motioned for her to come closer. The water played with the hem of her skirt as she tramped into the deeper section of the river, but Laurel didn’t mind. She tended not to mind much of anything in The Fishman’s presence.

“Good,” he voiced soothingly as Laurel stopped a few feet before him. “Now tell me, Lovely, what is it that has troubled you so?”

“It’s silly,” Laurel shifted her weight uncomfortably on the rocks beneath her, and she blushed. “I mean … do you think my nose is too big?”

She cast her eyes downward, looked into the clear waves that rippled underneath, and watched the minnows as they made figure eights by her feet.

“Why ever would you think that, Lovely?”

“I heard Lucy Ray talking. She said my nose was too wide and my lips too small for me to be considered pretty.” She paused and suddenly looked back up at the man on the rock. “Is that true?”

The Fishman was silent for a moment. Then he suddenly slid his legs into the water and walked up to her until they were only a few feet apart. “Of course not.” His lips twitched. “You are beautiful.”

Suddenly the doubt that had floated inside of her mind disappeared, and Laurel smiled.

Later that day, when Laurel prepared to put her shoes back on to return home, she saw a small scale on her right heel.

“What’s that?” she asked, turning her attention to The Fishman, who had returned to his rock and was watching her.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Lovely,” he said. “That happens sometimes when I compliment a beautiful girl. I try not to, but sometimes I just can’t help myself. I promise I won’t do it again.”

The Fishman kept his promise, but only for a year. The insecurities that had vanished with The Fishman’s compliment resurfaced in her mind as she began to look in the mirror more and more. She would brush her hair out of her face and pinch her cheeks like she had seen her mother do on occasion. There were days when the young girl was unsatisfied with her appearance. It was on one such day she went to see The Fishman.

They sat on his rock, a few trout watching them from the water below. The Fishman’s eyes were closed, but he smiled slightly as sunlight hit his face. Laurel was content with watching him until her eyes caught a glimpse of her own reflection on the water’s surface. She turned away sharply, causing the man beside her to open one eye curiously at her.

“Lovely?”

“I want you to compliment me again.”

The words tumbled out of her mouth like a waterfall, and The Fishman opened his other eye. He cocked his head to the side.

“Are you sure, Lovely?”

Laurel nodded.

The Fishman’s relaxed smile turned pleased, and his silver eyes sparkled. “Very well.” He turned so that he was staring straight into the young girl’s eyes. “The sparkle of your eyes put all gems to shame.”

Laurel smiled. Another scale appeared on her heel, and the Fishman continued to bask in the sun.

Only once a month, Laurel told herself as she went to visit The Fishman. Once a month, she would let The Fishman compliment her. Once a month her heel would gain a new, silver scale. They were small and easy to hide, and The Fishman’s words were sweet and comforting.

As time passed, once a month became once a week, and once a week became once a day. Laurel began to wear long skirts to cover the silver that peeked above her ankles.

Then came the day her mother convinced her to court Tommy Brensing. The now sixteen-year-old was not happy with the arrangement to begin with, as time spent with the young man interrupted her time with the Fishman, but she agreed. Tommy turned out to be a nice boy and began making Laurel’s heart feel as if it were trying to swim upstream. She began to visit the Fishman less and less, asking for a compliment only on days her suitor’s words were not enough.

“I do miss you, Lovely,” said The Fishman on one such occasion, “but I am glad that you are happy.”

Sadly, Laurel’s newfound happiness was not meant to last, and it was The Fishman she ran to when she discovered Tommy kissing Lucy Ray’s thin-nosed, full-lipped face.

“There, there, Lovely,” comforted The Fishman as she cried on top of his rock, the minnows and trout swimming around her tears, “You are more beautiful than all the stars in the sky.”

Laurel stayed on the rock all night, letting The Fishman whisper compliments into her ears. She came back every day following, sitting on the rock for hours to let The Fishman praise her from the slope of her nose to the glow of her skin. Scales crept up her legs and torso quickly, and soon she had to wear gloves.
whenever she managed to stay in the village to cover the silver on her fingertips.

Soon, the words didn’t work they way they once had. Every compliment came with a new insecurity that could not be met, and away from The Fishman’s slippery voice was doubt that churned into hatred at the thought of her appearance.

Laurel’s mother noticed. She noticed how her daughter would stare into the mirror with intense scrutiny, how the girl who had once tumbled and played kickball with the neighbor boys spent hours brushing her long hair and pinching her cheeks until they bled color, how she would disappear into the forest for hours on end without any insight into where she had been. The mother tried to reason with her daughter, but Laurel would simply stare at her with the same uncomprehending look that the trout gave The Fishman.

It was not long until the scales reached just beneath her chin. The Fishman continued to breathe out his compliments to her while Laurel sobbed. She sobbed for hours until the voice of The Fishman suddenly faded. Laurel looked up at him from where she stood, in the same place she had stood four years ago.

“Why did you stop?” she hiccupped. He sat on the rock, gazing at the stars.

“I have no more compliments to give.” He gestured to her face that shone silver in the moonlight.

“Please,” pleaded Laurel. “Just one more.”

The Fishman’s lips curled one last time, as he gestured for her to come forward with a single motion. She complied, hurrying against the current, and he met her under the moonlight and lifted her chin.

“You, Lovely, are the most beautiful fish in the sea.”

And before The Fishman, a trout joined the river below. Another beautiful fish.

Tainted Soil
Hanne Arts

“Hey….” A weak voice broke the silence of the monotonous beeps. I looked up and caught sight of a familiar stranger entering the room. A ray of afternoon sunlight fell into the room and onto the sharp features of his fair face as I closely followed his approach.

“Nice … uhm … nice weather … isn’t it? They say it will be even better tomorrow….” The newcomer’s eyes moved from my face to the window, from the window back to my face. With quivering hands he placed a bouquet of forget-me-nots on the bedside table, which was cluttered with numerous other withering flowers.

“Do you remember me?” It was a mere whisper.

I breathed with effort and examined the silhouette of the tall boy. He had sandy-blonde hair of medium length combed back on his head meticulously with gel, except for a couple of stubborn tufts at the front. These stood erect like the unyielding weeds in the back garden that could not be extirpated. I sighed.

The boy’s eyes were a clear, heavy blue; his thin brows were flawless and curved down in concern. Lying in bed, breathing in the chemical odor of sterilizer and the bittersweet smell of cleansing ointments, discerning the beeping and buzzing sounds of machinery, I wondered why this strikingly handsome fellow had anything to be tormented about, what weight could possibly have fallen upon his fragile shoulders. Dark bags hung beneath his eyes.

The familiar stranger, not yet a man though no longer a boy, approached the bed warily, seated himself in a chair, and introduced himself as Jack. He asked again whether I remembered him, but how could I remember him if I had never seen him before in my life?

“No,” I responded.

He seemed disappointed. After an instant of absolute silence, Jack started fervently unfolding stories of a seemingly perfect life, his voice trembling. He told me of the amazing relationship he’d had with his mom and the memories they had shared. He told me of the time they’d spent a holiday together at the beach, where their dog had barked at the waves. He told me of the weekend they’d spent in Austria skiing down Black Diamonds and drinking hot chocolate next to the wood stove. He made me smile as he told me of the time they’d visited Vidam Park and how his mom’s dentures fell out in one of the upside-down roller coaster rides.

The tales he told were wonderful, and they brought joy to my heart as I listened to them. Jack seemed to take pleasure in them too, for his eyes shone like stars in the darkness. I could not grasp his urge to tell me his stories, yet I was satisfied to be his listening ear.

With great effort, I readjusted my stiff bones and swallowed — though it was merely an attempt rather than a success, since the lump in my throat remained. I fidgeted with the stiff bed sheet, folding it repeatedly while Jack continued telling tales. As he talked on and on, he grew increasingly passionate.

By this time I had the corner of the blanket all folded up, so I readily began the unfolding process, one finger crossing the other, fold by fold.

After an hour of chatter, the boy finished his recollections.

“I … I took it all for granted….” he mumbled. I looked up from the wrinkled sheets and watched as a tear fell from the corner of his right eye, slowly slid down his cheek, and left a dark stain on his light-blue shirt.

Immediately I felt uncomfortable and helpless with the situation. Why was he crying? Why had he chosen me to open up his heart to?

Jack moved forward, so close that I could smell his aftershave: sweet and strong, yet with a hint of bitterness. Jack’s shoulders hunched, and his back curved like that of an old man. He placed his cold hand on top of mine. My hand halted midway in its sheet and away from The Fishman’s slippery voice was doubt that he remove his hand. He refused.

I slapped off his hand as if it were a mosquito sucking the last life from my body, smacking it so hard it hurt. I tried to get up in bed but my arms could not sustain my weight and I fell back into

Voices de la Luna, 15 July 2014 33
Panicking, I waited for help, for someone should certainly take this strange man away from me. My forehead was moist with anxious drops of sweat, my breath grew heavier, and I could feel my face turn red. Who knew what threat this lunatic posed?

I cried for assistance, and a group of nurses rushed into the room, none of whom I knew. The medical odor of disinfectant mixed with that of Jack’s perfume, my sweat, and the drooping flowers next to my bed created a sickening stench. I flung my arms around myself and clutched my chest tightly in an attempt to throw off all strangers.

My strength was nothing compared with that of my aggressors, and they pinned me to the bed with iron force. Their fingers dug into my pink flesh, leaving behind red marks.

What were they doing to me? Were they out of their minds? I was the one who had called for help! I wasn’t the abuser—I was the victim!

The nurses, ignorant of this fact, injected a clear fluid into my upper arm with a needle. My rapidly beating heart pumped the pungent fluid through my swollen veins. I didn’t want to lose consciousness but was unable to stay awake.

The unknown boy was led from the room, tears running down his cheeks as though his last hopes had evaporated. Similarly, the will to resist left my body. If only those damn weeds would withdraw as swiftly…

My breath choked and my heart skipped a beat. At that moment, as Jack was being led away, I discerned the last words rolling off his quivering lips.

“I’m sorry, Mom,” he murmured. “I love you.”

Running through Thunder
Jeanne Mulligan

4:30 meant freedom. Not necessarily for me, since I was never burdened at twelve years of age with the job of watching a younger brother all day, every day, all summer long. But 4:30 meant freedom for Michele, because that was the time her mother got home from work. We were old enough to get into our community pool without an adult, and that is where we would go for that precious half-hour before adult swim began at five o’clock. We would wait, ready in our bathing suits, for the sound of her mother’s car in the driveway. As soon as she got out of that car, we ran the seven long blocks to Azalea Pool, to freedom and water and laughter.

By the time we got to the pool, we had maybe twenty minutes left. We would throw our towels down on the wet cement next to the chain link fence and jump in. The smell of chlorine was strong, and the pool was loud with the laughter and careless fun of summer. We played games, including diving for a penny. The penny we threw would float down and settle at the bottom of the pool, lying on the cracked aqua cement, blurry at first and then coming into sharp focus. We would take turns throwing it and racing to find it. With each toss the penny landed closer and then coming into sharp focus. We would take turns throwing it and racing to find it. With each toss the penny landed closer and closer to the diving board at the deep end of the pool. The time went fast.

At five o’clock, the lifeguards would all stand and blow their whistles, and we had to get out of the pool. On this particular day, however, we were watching the lifeguards for another reason. The sky to the west was suddenly dark. We hadn’t noticed it earlier; we were too intent on getting to the pool and cooling off. Sure enough, a huge bolt of lightning cracked the sky, and the whistles blew to clear the pool and close it. This thunderstorm was barreling toward us with alarming speed. Michele and I grabbed our towels and flip-flops and walked quickly to the pool gate. But wait—there was no line at the ice cream truck!

Our routine was to spend fifty cents at the ice cream truck, if we had the money. Our choice was strawberry shortcake on a stick to share, and a cherry or lemon popsicle to “wash it down,” as Michele said. Though the sky was black, we couldn’t resist. Lighting brightened the area, followed by an immediate thunderclap. Just as we got our ice cream, rain poured from the darkened sky. We ran in slick flip-flops, trying to hold our ice cream and soaking wet towels. We ran around the church path trying pointlessly to hold the heavy, sopping wet towels over our heads, crossed the street, screamed as the lightning flashed again, and ditched the wet ice cream. Michele lost a flip-flop, ran back to pick it up, and we laughed and continued to run screaming and laughing with each burst of lightening and crash of thunder. Soon we were doubled-over with laughter and we stopped running altogether.

Why did laughing and screaming actually feel good? Maybe it was simply a release at the end of a day of too much energy. Maybe it was childhood innocence, or maybe it was just what we did. “Scary and funny” was what we did together, through movies and play, getting into trouble, and making our way through life’s real events that included deaths in my family and divorce in hers. Sometimes scary and funny was too real. But at 4:30 on this particular summer afternoon we faced our fear and laughed our way through the first of many storms to come, together.
was, though his ideas were often practical. It was up to the viewers to decide when. And since his cobbler peche subere sounded French, it was a hit with both hoi polloi and opinion-makers. Daddy’s cooking skill and wit were gaining momentum; he had a new book out and a TV show, Watch Me Do Three-Minute Stew.

We kids were living with a real estate mogul and a celebrity chef whose recipe book was flying off the shelves. It sounded like a fairy tale. But it was just our family luck.

It would have been nice if we kids had been able to complete the circle. One of us should have been a famous golf pro, winning the Masters on Mama’s golf course. Or one of us should have inherited Julia Child’s chair at Le Cordon Bleu. But that didn’t happen. As luck had it, we learned to live in an unsure world.

The truth is, we were poor. Too contented to know it, we took luck in stride when it came along. Susie became a college guidance counselor. I am head surgeon of a Level One trauma center.

Nowadays Mama can’t ride her bike in the hills anymore; bad knees. She still doesn’t cook. She puts now and then at the golf club—on the house, of course. Daddy hasn’t eaten an ordinary peach cobbler since his childhood. Most loves his folded-bread version—quicker, and no sugar except that natural Stonewall deliciousness. His recipes have turned out to be quite healthy sometimes. His TV show was renewed again, and his book is in its third printing. We kids play golf now and then, and we will always fold our peach cobblers.

I guess sometimes a brand new mixture works. To cobble, you know, sort of means to make something good out of the unexpected.

---

**Can We Become Smarter?**

**Lessons from Smarter by Dan Hurley**

Reviewed by Maria Oddo

Since ancient times, humanity has struggled to find ways to become smarter, often using the notion that if you can increase your body strength by performing regular physical exercises, you should be able to increase your cognitive strength by doing brain exercises. In the well-written book *Smarter*, psychologist Dan Hurley argues that there is credible scientific evidence that by using physical exercises, musical training, mindful meditation, and the computerized approach of Lumosity, one may achieve improvement in fluid intelligence. Hurley goes as far as subjecting himself to vigorous programs including something he calls “Boot Camp for My Brain” to personally evaluate these techniques of enhancing fluid intelligence. In the final chapter Hurley presents the results: his IQ went from 136 to 137; on Lumosity, his “brain performance index,” which was 274 earlier, peaked on his last day of training to 1,135—four times higher than the average for his age group. Hurley successfully argues that treating the depression common in old age with physical exercises, which increase blood flow to the brain, mindful meditation, and nicotine patches will all help to improve cognitive fluidity. In an interview with the *New York Times*, he claimed that the program outlined in the book has truly made him smarter. For more information, please visit www.danhurley.com.

---

1. Lumosity: A commercially available program that offers “brain training” exercises that claim to improve neuroplasticity.

2. Fluid Intelligence: As defined in Introduction, p. xxi, “Fluid intelligence is the underlying ability to learn, the capacity to solve novel problems, see underlying patterns and figure out things that were never explicitly taught,” as opposed to Crystallized Intelligence, which is “a treasure trove of stored up information and how-to knowledge.”


4. Mindful Meditation: p. 92, excerpt from a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*.

5. Cognitive Fluidity: this may be another name for “fluid intelligence.”

---

**The Song of the Pilgrims**

*Rupert Brooke*

(Halted around the fire by night, after moon-set, they sing this beneath the trees.)

What light of unremembered skies
Hast thou relumed within our eyes,
Thou whom we seek, whom we shall find? …

A certain odour on the wind,
Thy hidden face beyond the west,
These things have called us; on a quest
Older than any road we trod,
More endless than desire….

Far God,
Sigh with thy cruel voice, that fills
The soul with longing for dim hills
And faint horizons! For there come
Grey moments of the antient dumb
Sickness of travel, when no song
Can cheer us; but the way seems long;
And one remembers….

Ah! the beat
Of weary unreturning feet,
And songs of pilgrims unreturning! …

The fires we left are always burning
On the old shrines of home. Our kin
Have built them temples, and therein
Pray to the Gods we know; and dwell
In little houses lovable,
Being happy (we remember how!)
And peaceful even to death….

O Thou,
God of all long desirous roaming,
Our hearts are sick of fruitless homing,
And crying after lost desire.

Hearten us onward! as with fire
Consuming dreams of other bliss.
The best Thou givest, giving this
Sufficient thing—to travel still
Over the plain, beyond the hill,
Unhesitating through the shade,
Amid the silence unafraid,
Till, at some sudden turn, one sees
Against the black and muttering trees
Thine altar, wonderfully white,
Among the Forests of the Night.
11/22/2013: Tonight is our last night in Hanoi (Vietnam) after returning from mesmerizing Ha Long Bay. Early tomorrow we will be returning home to our beloved city, San Antonio. I’ll take home poems, photos, and an essay from this mystifying region, beautiful natural images, but also photos of places that witnessed brutal scenes of genocide and war. Without the capacity to tolerate tragedies and forgive and forget, these communities would not have survived into modern times.

9/2/1945: Born in 1890 in Vietnam under French colonial rule, Ho Chi Minh would grow up to lead not one but two successful wars of independence in his country. In his formative years, Ho traveled widely as a sailor and lived in Paris, Harlem, and Boston, where he worked as a cook and baker and did menial jobs. Upon his return to Hanoi, he became active in politics. During World War II, French rulers quickly abandoned Vietnam to the Japanese invaders. After the Vietnamese routed the Japanese, Ho and his group declared independence on 2 September 1945. Ho had long admired the American Constitution. “All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” These words appear in both the American Declaration of Independence and the Vietnamese Declaration of 1945. In a broader sense, this means: all the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

10/17/1945: In a letter to President Truman, Ho Chi Minh sought President Truman’s help to support Vietnamese independence and called on Allied Nations to recognize Vietnam’s rights to become an independent republic: “We wish to call the attention of the Allied Nations on the vital points facing the United States in the Far East” and requested to “take part in an advisory commission for the Far East. We should be very grateful to Your Excellency, Premier Attlee, Premier Stalin, and Generalissimo Chang Kai Shek for the conveyance of our Desiderata to the United Nations.”

11/20/2013: We are dining at the Sofitel Hotel Hanoi, which was built after the Vietnamese government implemented open market policy in 1986 and invited Western companies to invest in the country. Earlier in the afternoon we visited the Temple of Literature, where a statue of Confucius is the most notable attraction. Poetry is a popular genre of creative writing in Vietnam, where Ho Chi Minh himself is considered a notable poet. His major collection, Poems from Prison, includes the poem “Clear Morning”: “The morning sun / shines over the prison wall, //And drives away the shadows / and miasmas of hopelessness. // A life-giving breeze / blows across the earth. // A hundred imprisoned faces / smile once more.”

10/26/1967: John McCain was flying his 23rd bombing mission over North Vietnam when his A-4E Skyhawk was shot down by a missile over Hanoi. He sustained serious injuries and was kept at the “Hanoi Hilton” jail. Our Vietnamese guide, a proud member of the Vietnamese Communist Party, neglects to mention that McCain was deprived of medical care and subjected to torture and physical interrogation. Only after the Vietnamese discovered that McCain’s father was a general did they extend the necessary medical care to McCain. Instead the guides details the brutalities of French colonial rule, especially ruthless after World War I, when Vietnamese independence fighters were usually beheaded by guillotine and their heads displayed in the city markets. After the implementation of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, neither the United States nor her allies ever formally charged North Vietnam with war crimes such as McCain’s handling in prison, lest the Americans and their allies be prosecuted for their own poor treatment of prisoners of war.

11/22/2013: After visiting Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the group gathers in a corner of the huge square. The guide resumes his propaganda about his country’s position during the Vietnam War. He quotes Ho Chi Minh from an interview with Rene J. Defournieux on 9 August 1966: “I have always been impressed with your country’s treatment of the Philippines. You kicked the Spanish out and let the Filipinos develop their own country. You were not looking for real estate, and I admire you for that. I have a government that is organized and ready to go. Your statesmen make eloquent speeches about helping those with self-determination. We are self-determined. Why not help us? Am I any different from Nehru, Quezon, or even your own George Washington? I, too, want to set my people free.”

09/02/1969: With the outcome of the Vietnam War still in question, Ho Chi Minh, aged 79, died at 9:47 a.m. on the morning of 2 September 1969 from heart failure at his simple home in Hanoi. Despite his written instructions that he be cremated, his embalmed body is currently on display in a gigantic mausoleum in Hanoi.

07/15/1969: Until his death from heart disease, Ho Chi Minh wrote seven personal letters to various presidents of the United States, initially to explain Vietnam’s desire for independence, and later to seek support for their war of independence against France. Altogether, he wrote five letters to President Truman, one to President Johnson, and the last letter before his death to President Nixon. He genuinely believed in the power of words, but the five initial letters to President Truman were never even read by the president. As a poet and writer, Ho was eager to explain his country to the American people and their presidents, hoping to influence the course of history; however, because of other factors, including the rise of communism in Asia and other geopolitical considerations, the Vietnam War became inevitable.
01/18/1946: From Ho Chi Minh’s letter to President Truman: “In 1941 Vietnam rose up to oppose Japanese Fascism and sided with the Allies. After Japan surrendered a provisional government was set up to eradicate Fascism in Vietnam and restore order. Supported by the whole nation, it carried out a democratic program, and restored order and discipline. Under difficult circumstances general elections for our national congress were held on Jan 6, 1946. Ninety percent of the nine million electors voted.”

02/08/1967: From the letter of President Johnson to Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 8 February 8, 1967: “I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Viet-Nam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Viet-nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.”

02/10/1967: From Ho Chi Minh’s reply to President Johnson: “In your message you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States. If the United States Government really wants talks, it must first halt unconditionally the bombings and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. It is only after the unconditional halting of the American bombings and of all other American acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam that the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States could begin talks and discuss questions affecting the two parties.”

11/22/2013: A popular tourist destination, Hạ Long Bay features thousands of cone-shaped limestone islands, some as small as a cliff, and some large enough to host small fishing villages at their peripheries. We navigate to a large islet which contains a hundred-meter wide cave and walk through its well-lit chambers. In 2012, the New Seven Wonders Foundation officially named Hạ Long Bay one of New Seven Natural Wonders of the world. Hạ Long Bay is also a member of the Club of the Most Beautiful Bays of the World. Twenty years ago it was almost unknown. Nowadays it is on the route of most cruises through the South China Sea.

07/15/1969: The last letter of Ho Chi Minh to an American president was written to President Nixon just two months before Ho’s death: “I realize that it is difficult to communicate meaningfully across the gulf of four years of war. But precisely because of this gulf, I wanted to take this opportunity to reaffirm in all solemnity my desire to work for a just peace. I deeply believe that the war in Vietnam has gone on too long and delay in bringing it to an end can benefit no one—least of all the people of Vietnam.” However the war would go on for another four years with more destruction and death on both sides.

11/22/2013: The group gathers for a farewell dinner at the hotel restaurant. The tour director, who is Thai and speaks adequate English, explains arrangements for transportation to the airport and departure from Hanoi. The Vietnamese guide invites everyone to return to Vietnam and spend long vacations there. The last supper in Hanoi ends with recitation of a poem, which begins: “It begins with a call / at the crack of dawn / shower in a marble cubicle / then steamy coffee / with sunny orange juice / and a bloody watermelon slice.” The poem ends with “happy image of Buddha / broken to pieces / the moon silently stares / at ruthlessly warring mankind.” For our last meal in Hanoi, we walk to a crowded street nearby and taste some street food, including a spicy seafood congee hotpot.

**Sailing to Byzantium**  
*W. B. Yeats*

That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another’s arms, birds in the trees  
—Those dying generations—at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensuous music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium.

O sages standing in God’s holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
The Marches: A Novel

BOOK TWO

The Flood

Chapter Twenty-Two (continued)

This Stomach Ulcer is Cancerous

She was frightened, thinking about the large tumor growing in her body, but listened calmly, nodded, and asked Cyrus, “Continue, please.”

“I believe anti-cancer drugs are more beneficial. They have harsh side-effects but they are not life-threatening.” He added that Dr. Shaad concurred with this recommendation. Then he remembered Dr. Shaad’s story about Ayatollah Khomeini’s surgery.

“Mother, incidentally, Dr. Shaad performed the same surgical procedure on Ayatollah Khomeini and actually used the same instrument on both of you.”

“What are you serious? Is that really true?” His mother was amused and pleased to learn that her doctor had been involved in the care of such a prominent patient. “Your friend must be well-trusted by the mullahs to be involved in the care of the Ayatollah,” she decided. “It means that he is well respected.” Then she became thoughtful again. After a while she said, “I hope I will not suffer the same fate as Ayatollah Khomeini did after his procedure.” She was referring to the death of Ayatollah Khomeini soon after his gastroscopy.

All of a sudden her face twitched with pain and she gasped for more pain medicine. But as soon as her cramps subsided she smiled at her son. “Cyrus, tell me about your training in cancer therapy!”

Cyrus explained that his cancer training had included a few months at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. “I saw patients from all over the world. They would stay in hotels near the cancer center and show up every morning for chemotherapy. A good number of them did quite well.”

She was happy about her son’s optimism and joked, “Be sure they use same medicines on me.”

“I’ll send you all your medications from the U.S. But you know, it would be even better if you could come with me to Texas.”

She whispered, “Who knows how long I’ll live.” She touched her abdomen reflexively. “With tumors all over my insides, it doesn’t make much difference where I go for treatment.”

Soon she became sleepy. Cyrus placed her head on the soft pillow and watched her close her eyes and fall asleep. The dim light made her pale face seem ever more anemic. Her breathing was shallow and rapid. Cyrus noted her hands were pressing against her stomach. She let out a sigh. Her face contorted with pain but her abdomen reflexively. “With tumors all over my insides, it doesn’t make much difference where I go for treatment.”

After listening to his arguments, everyone except Parviz agreed to send their mother to the U.S. with Cyrus.

Maryam reminded them, “Fortunately her passport has already been issued. The only thing Mother needs now is an exit permit and an airline ticket.”

Cyrus offered to get her an airline ticket to Texas.

“We have already applied for an exit permit, and I believe it’s ready. I’ll go to the passport office tomorrow morning to check on it,” Maryam promised, and added in an uncertain tone, “I’m a bit worried about her old photographs. I submitted passport photos of her that were taken just after the revolution. She was much younger then and much healthier.” She brought a copy of the photograph. “Look, doesn’t she look twenty years younger?”

“Poor Mother!” Cyrus agreed, “she has really aged.”

“Only a good doctor can detect a discrepancy!” Maryam complimented him. “With that black veil covering her from head to toe, no official would notice any change.”

Cyrus wondered about the glare of the large prescription glasses that covered his mother’s eyes.

But Parviz, who had resigned himself to the wish of the family about Mother’s trip, assured him, “With the black veil and the glasses, there is very little face left to study or to detect any difference.”

Despite their sorrow, the siblings were amused. Habib announced confidently, “After all, this is her real photo, and who would dare argue with the truth?”

The following day, their mother looked very pale and uncomfortable. She complained of severe cramps and was restless all morning. Cyrus gave her more painkillers. When she was finally able to rest, Cyrus left to arrange her flight to Texas, and Maryam left to get the exit permit. By mid-afternoon, Maryam returned. She had succeeded in getting the exit permit and handed it to Cyrus.

“Please, hold on to these documents, because the airline will ask for them when they issue her ticket.”

Cyrus slipped the documents in his briefcase, right next to his own travel documents. Then he went to check on their mother and found her restless again. Her hands felt sweaty and cold. Her pulse was weak but fast. She was not alert and appeared to be lightheaded. She gasped for air, moaned, and muttered unintelligibly. Her hands were moving constantly over her abdomen. She began burping and vomited frothy saliva stained with fresh blood. She moaned louder and cried out with pain. A moment later, she vomited pure blood. Distraught and worried, Cyrus quickly cleaned her mouth, called Maryam to stay with her, and rushed to the phone to call Dr. Shaad.

An hour later, the ambulance brought their mother to the hospital where Dr. Shaad admitted her to the intensive care unit. Her blood pressure was extremely low, and Dr. Shaad could barely hear her heartbeat. He started intravenous fluid and asked for several units of blood. Both Dr. Shaad and Cyrus knew a massive internal hemorrhage had caused her to go into shock. While
they were waiting for the blood to arrive, their patient vomited more blood. The two physicians knew they were running out of time. When a nurse started the blood transfusion, the old woman slipped into a coma. Presently, neither of the two men could detect a pulse or a heartbeat. She had stopped breathing and her pupils were fully dilated.

Dr. Shaad listened for a last time and looked up at his friend. “There is no heartbeat.”

He moved aside and touched Cyrus’s shoulder in sympathy. Cyrus was stunned and in utter disbelief. He pulled off his friend’s stethoscope and listened to his mother’s silent heart for awhile. He lifted her eyelids and looked at her dilated pupils and touched her utterly still chest wall and realized he had lost his mother forever. He felt extremely lonely. She had been his last real connection to home, the one who could pull him back to Iran any time. He would have done anything or traveled anywhere for her. He had been robbed of the most admirable person in his life.

Dr. Shaad’s voice broke into his mournful thoughts, “My friend, please accept my condolences.”

Cyrus stumbled out to the waiting room, where he confronted the sobbing family. He sought his sister’s embrace and support.

She squeezed his arms gently and whispered, “She suffered a lot lately.”

“I could have helped her….” Cyrus couldn’t complete the sentence.

Maryam consoled him. “It’s not yours or anybody else’s fault. Mother didn’t take her problem seriously.” Maryam realized Cyrus was feeling guilty and responsible.

Parviz supported Maryam. “We all thought it was just the same old stomach ulcer.”

Maryam added, “She couldn’t have gone to Texas earlier. As recently as a few months ago, it was impossible to get out of Iran for any reason.” She concluded, “We were really surprised when you succeeded in completing all formalities and managed to come here so quickly.” Her words put only a slight damper on the deep pain coursing through Cyrus heart.

Chapter Twenty-Three
The Family Hastily Proceeded to Arrange the Funeral

The family hastily proceeded to arrange the funeral within the required twenty-four hour period, only two days before Cyrus’s scheduled departure from Iran. After the funeral Maryam reminded Cyrus that even though he had an exit permit from the Iranian Interest Office in Washington DC, he still needed to go to the Passport Office to verify the permit and submit his passport for inspection.

Remembering his previous trip and his visit to the passport office eleven years ago with Reza, his thoughts turned to that young man. Now that he was no longer preoccupied with his mother’s illness, he really wanted to know what had happened to Reza, Bahram, and Shirin. Nobody had mentioned anything about those three young revolutionaries since his arrival.

“This afternoon, we will have a lot of visitors to express their condolences.” Maryam’s voice broke into his thoughts. He replied with eagerness, “Will Bahram, Shirin, and Reza come, too? I haven’t seen them yet.”

Faced with this unexpectedly direct inquiry, she replied, “I don’t think so. Nobody has seen much of them for several years.”

Cyrus was confused, “So where are they? How come neither of them has visited me?”

“Because I haven’t been able to tell them of your visit,” Maryam explained. “Nobody knows where they are!”

Before Maryam left Cyrus to arrange refreshments, she whispered in his ear, “You’re better off not asking about them at all. It could cause you some serious problems.”

There was no time for further explanations. The doorbell rang, and friends and relatives began to arrive.

One of the visitors was his old friend Tooraj, who sat next to him, put an arm around his shoulders and asked, “How are you coping, my friend?”

“Not well. My mother suffered severely. She hemorrhaged so much that we couldn’t do anything for her.”

Tooraj who had known the family since their student days, consoled him. “You did everything possible. Besides, we all are going to die sooner or later. Death is part of life. Without death, life is meaningless!”

Cyrus remembered that Tooraj was always philosophical and cheerful, even in sad times.

“I am sorry about your mother’s death. She was a well respected thinker and an avid reader.” Tooraj continued in cautious jest, “Even though she would read only religious books.”

Cyrus smiled at his friend. He understood Tooraj’s remark, nodded, and looking more intently into his worn out face, said, “My friend, you have aged a lot since I saw you last time. What happened to you?”

“My wife also says that I’m declining,” he muttered gloomily. “It must be because of my boring life in this country. It comes from the absence of happiness and the grim faces of all the people around me.”

Tooraj was no longer smiling. A few tears rolled down his cheeks. “I would do anything to leave this society that is so stuck in the Dark Ages. I need to get away from those monstrous Revolutionary Guards who are intruding into our homes, our private lives, and even into our bedrooms. They are constantly harassing our wives and our daughters.”

He was noticeably angry now, but controlled his temper, paused, and became quiet again.

When his familiar charm returned, Cyrus tried to tease him. “Your sadness could also be due to a lack of good wine.”

Tooraj cheered up at that comment, “Yes, lack of wine makes me unhappy and old. I suspect my home brewed beer is gradually poisoning my body and will eventually kill me.”

Other relatives and friends came over and interrupted their conversation. After what seemed like hours of polite conversations, the apartment finally emptied.

Tooraj returned to Cyrus and asked, “What are you doing tonight?”

“I don’t have any plans.”

“Come to my house for dinner and try my home-brewed beer. Don’t you want to visit my family?”

When Cyrus hesitated, Tooraj whispered urgently, “I have a message for you. It is rather important. I can’t tell you now what it is, but I am sure it will be of interest to you.”

This mysterious comment intrigued Cyrus. He knew Tooraj had become close friends with Bahram and Shirin after the revolution and wondered whether the message could be related to them.

“Is it from our mutual friends Bahram or Shirin?”

Tooraj nodded.

“Are they all right?”

“At present they are.”

“How about Reza?” Cyrus quietly asked.

“Let’s meet tonight,” his friend urged. “I can assure you this will not put you in any jeopardy.”

Eager to know about the fate of those idealistic revolutionaries, Cyrus decided to accept. “I will be there. Are you still at the same address?”

“I will come and pick you up around eight o’clock tonight.”

Later that afternoon Cyrus went to the passport office to confirm his exit permit. A bearded official told him that the permit
was valid for his departure but kept the passport for another routine review.

“We’ll send it to the airport.”

By now Cyrus had learned that his passport would be checked by several government agencies, including the foreign ministry, the Islamic Revolutionary Court, and the police department before he was cleared to leave Iran.

“Go to the airport police office at least two hours before departure and pick up your passport,” the official instructed him.

“Do you anticipate any problems?” Cyrus asked.

The official retorted, “Do you have any outstanding issues in the Islamic Republic?”

“Sir, I haven’t even been here since 1978.”

“In that case, the review should be routine, and you will be cleared promptly.”

Chapter Twenty-Four
Shortly before Eight O’clock in the Evening the Doorbell Rang

Shortly before eight o’clock in the evening the doorbell rang. It was Tooraj, who had come to pick up Cyrus.

“I’ll be going to Tooraj’s house for dinner tonight,” he told Maryam.

“Don’t drink, please! The Revolutionary Guards are everywhere after ten o’clock,” she cautioned him. “They can arrest you if they find any trace of alcohol on your breath. Don’t do anything to jeopardize your last days with us.”

Tooraj’s home was about ten minutes’ drive away. The house sat in a well-attended garden where lights illuminated fragrant rose bushes in full bloom.

“My wife loves gardening,” Tooraj said proudly, as they walked through the garden and entered the house via a side patio.

They had a short conversation with Tooraj’s wife and his three daughters, and then the men went to the dining room. Tooraj brought out four bottles of home brewed beer, which he jokingly introduced as Tooraj-brau.

Cyrus filled his glass and took a tentative sip. “It does taste like real beer,” he conceded, amused.

Tooraj was delighted to hear this appreciation of his home brew. “You can’t find beer, wine, or any other alcoholic beverages in the stores, so lots of people brew or distill at home.”

His wife and daughters joined the men for a light dinner. Nursing his second bottle, Cyrus felt a slight buzz in his head and asked Tooraj what the level of alcohol in that brew was. It seemed higher than in standard American beer.

“You are quite right and I am proud of it!” Tooraj smiled.

“When I measured my beer at the hospital laboratory, it showed over eight percent alcohol.”

“That’s a lot,” Cyrus conceded.

“Believe it or not,” Tooraj confided, “we can buy any number of American and European beers on the black market. Once, I even bought a bottle of Johnny Walker whisky from a Revolutionary Guard, the father of one of my patients.”

Cyrus was amused by this insight into the workings of a supposedly strictly Islamic society.

“Why don’t you sell your beer to your friends? It tastes great and has more alcohol than black market beers.”

Tooraj laughed. “Look at you! Just like a typical American businessman—everything is a commodity and should produce a profit. Not in this country, my friend. I’ll enjoy this only at home with my wife and sometimes with friends like you.”

Afier a few more sips, Tooraj remembered Hafez’s poems about drinking red wine with a lover or a friend. “Shall I recite a ghazal by Hafez for you?” he offered.

Cyrus encouraged him with a nod.

Tooraj promptly recited the following poem: “… Angel! Brighten our cups with wine so radiant! / Call musicians. The world has turned to our favor. / O, ignorant of our pleasure in wine! / We have seen our darling’s face shine in our goblet. / One, whose heart was brightened with love, never dies! / We have become eternal, our names inscribed on the universe’s almanac ….”

Tooraj skipped several verses and resumed, “… I am afraid, on resurrection, a sheik’s bread, / Would earn no more than our forbidden wine. / Hafez! Wipe off the tears from your eyes, / Because the bird of happiness is falling in our trap!”

After dinner, the women got up to clear the table, while the men went to the living room to talk privately.

Cyrus asked Tooraj, “Do you know where Bahram, Reza, and Shirin are? My sister doesn’t know anything about them.”

Tooraj weighed his answer for a moment and then replied, “I don’t have current news about Reza. His fate is a mystery. He was imprisoned right after President Bani-Sadr’s removal by the clergy, and nobody knows if he is hiding or in prison, alive or dead.”

“What about Shirin?”

“Shirin is in hiding in a safe house somewhere in Tehran.”

“How long has she been in hiding?” Cyrus asked in surprise.

“For a long time, since Bahram’s arrest,” Tooraj said.

Even though Cyrus had anticipated disturbing news about his young friends, the horror of their fate shocked him.

“Why would anybody arrest Bahram and Reza and prosecute Shirin? They were among the flowers of the revolution! How could the government act against them—didn’t anybody respect their achievements?”

Tooraj explained, “The revolution turned into an unpredictable storm. Very soon after the start it came to be dominated by hard-line religious fundamentalists who declared holy war against all other opposition groups, such as the National Front, socialists, communists, Fadayan, and Mojaheddins, and they labeled them.”

Tooraj explained, “The revolution turned into an unpredictable storm. Very soon after the start it came to be dominated by hard-line religious fundamentalists who declared holy war against all other opposition groups, such as the National Front, socialists, communists, Fadayan, and Mojaheddins, and they labeled them all enemies of the Islamic revolution.”

The other groups didn’t interest Cyrus as much as Bahram, Reza, and Shirin did. He wanted to know in detail what happened to them while the shifting sands of the revolutionary storm savagely shook people’s lives. He wanted to know whether they had ever finished their university education. Tooraj embarked on a lengthy account of the post-revolutionary times in Iran, but soon Cyrus became bored and interrupted him.

“I am not interested in history. Please, tell me what happened to my friends.”

Tooraj finally came to the point. “Bahram was accused of anti-Islamic activities and expelled from Tehran Medical School three years ago, although he had almost finished his internship.”

Then Tooraj detoured again into the fate of diverse political groups who were active before and during the early years of the revolution.

“Despite the many contributions of these groups to the Iranian revolution, the clergy soon limited their political activities and expelled their supporters from universities and government agencies. Initially these groups protested peacefully against those unreasonable measures, but when their efforts failed, they resorted to strikes and finally street battles against the Islamic government security forces.”

“So they had to struggle again, just as during the Shah’s time,” Cyrus angrily exclaimed. “It sure seems like everything was in vain!”
Tooraj wanted to make Cyrus understand how things happened. Bahram had been a popular activist in the university and had organized many peaceful demonstrations against the Islamic oppression, but the clergy used the same tactics the Nazis had used in the 1930s. The paramilitary Hezbollah became their tool to crush all undesirable demonstrations and to attack and destroy the offices of all opposition groups.

He explained, “Well, it worked like this: first a group of Hezbollah members would attack the demonstrators and create chaos, and then the Revolutionary Guards would join in and arrest the demonstrators. In one of these street battles Bahram was badly injured and arrested. And that was the last time anybody has seen him.”

Horrible images of torture crushed Cyrus’s hopes regarding his friends. He cautiously asked, “Is Bahram still alive?”

“As far as I know, he is still in Evin Prison. Unfortunately, our mutual friends were not the only losers. Thousands of other supporters of the revolution shared their fate. Many ended up in prison, many more escaped to neighboring countries, and some of them even lost their lives.”

Cyrus aired his anger. “So how are you coping with this suffocating existence?”

“We manage to live badly, sadly, and hopelessly!”

“What a tragedy!”

“One risks one’s own job and possibly even one’s life if one criticizes the Islamic government.” Tooraj’s grim face became sad. He remembered the initial exuberance of the revolution and exclaimed, “What a dismal outcome! What a great tragedy!”

Cyrus agreed. They both had another gulp of the bitter beer. After a while Cyrus wondered out loud, “Do you think it is Iran’s destiny to always live in the smog of some dictatorship?”

“I didn’t know you believed in destiny,” Tooraj tried to joke.

Cyrus grimaced. “Isn’t that how Iranian poets get their sad imagery, their pessimism and unfulfilled dreams?”

***Tooraj countered passionately, “I only listen to sad music or recite tragic poems to alleviate my own bitter feelings about this gloomy life.” He continued, “It has been like this in Iran ever since the Arabs destroyed our Persian Empire in the seventh century.”

He picked up one of the books of poems, leafed through it, chose one, and eagerly offered to recite it.

“Go ahead, don’t let me stop you!” Cyrus cried out.

“This one is a perfect mirror of our worthless lives.” Tooraj began declaiming passionately: “If one must live—disgraceful as it is, / I would be mortified, / If I did not hang my dimmed life, / Ashamed, / From a tall, dead pine tree, / In a dead-end alley.”

It was evident that Tooraj was totally engulfed in the melancholic world of this poem. He rendered the lines masterfully, observing rhymes and accents, “If one must live—immaculate as it is, / I would be impure, / If I did not erect a tower / For my virtue like a mountain, / An immortal monument / Towering above the land.”

The recital had transformed Tooraj’s anger into a mystical acceptance of a destiny which excluded any hope for a joyous life in the present. He urged Cyrus to find an appropriate poem for his own feelings.

Cyrus leafed through the pages and pointed to one. “This one applies to the fate of our revolutionaries, and it’s called ‘Retribution.’”

Tooraj begged his friend to read it.

Cyrus replied, “It’s been a long time since I’ve recited a Persian poem, but here it is: ‘Here, there are four prisons, / In each prison, two tunnels. In each tunnel, several niches. / In each niche several men, chained. / Of these chained men, one, in a dark feverish night, / Has killed his wife with a dagger. / Of these

men, one, stained his children’s bread, / With a devilish baker’s blood / In an alley at high noon one summer….’” He stopped to absorb the utter sadness of the words.

“Do continue, please,” Tooraj insisted.

Cyrus turned a page and continued with the last stanza, “…But, me! / I only listened in my mountain dreams / To the cold echoes of the calm songs of wild plants / That have grown, declined, dried up, and then fallen. / This is my crime, / This is my crime!”

He took a deep breath and looked up at his friend. Tooraj’s eyes were fixed on Cyrus with a strange expression.

Suddenly Cyrus knew his friend had something important to tell him, and urged him, “Tooraj! Out with it! Go on, don’t hold back. Tell me!”

Tooraj hesitated, but Cyrus urgently insisted, “You had a message for me, didn’t you? Give it to me, now, please!”

“Yes, I do have something for you, from Shirin.”

“Is she all right?” Cyrus asked impatiently.

“Yes, for the time being,” Tooraj replied. “Late this morning, a mullah brought a sick child to my office. The child was coughing but appeared otherwise in good health. The mullah simply wanted a prescription for his child’s cough, but before he left my office, he pulled a package from under his abba coat and placed it on my desk, whispering, ‘This is from Shirin. Don’t open it now. She has a letter for a friend in it. Follow her instructions, but if the friend is gone, please destroy the whole package.’”

“Where is it?” Cyrus demanded.

Tooraj brought a small envelope, “We live in dangerous times. I’m guessing, but she may be asking you for help. Are sure you want to read it?”

Since Cyrus was leaving the country in less than twenty-four hours, he was doubtful whether he could help anybody. But he was deeply interested in the fate of these once-promising idealists and decided to take it and read it in his room.

It was late at night and the house was quiet when Cyrus finally unwrapped the package. He immediately recognized Shirin’s handwriting on the envelope inside. Her letter was short and terse. After an initial greeting and her heartfelt condolences on the loss of his mother, Shirin asked Cyrus to call a friend in Frankfurt during his stopover there.

“Please call Kambiz as soon as you can. He is an Iranian student, and here is his phone number….” Tell him that Bahram plans to escape into Turkey. He may cross the border later this week…” She suggested Cyrus memorize the phone number and destroy the letter right away. She implored him, “… This message may save Bahram’s life, because he’ll need help near the Turkish border. Please, be sure to tell Kambiz that Eskandar is our Kurdish friend in the village near the border.”

To be continued …
Wings Press, founded in 1975, strives to publish multicultural books, chapbooks, ebooks, and other literary products that enliven the human spirit and enlighten the mind. The publisher, editor, and designer since 1995, Bryce Milligan, attempts to produce multicultural books, ebooks, fine chapbooks, and broadsides that, we hope, enlighten the human spirit and enliven the mind. Everyone ever associated with Wings has been or is a writer, and we know well that 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, broad-minded and interesting. But most of all it is honest. Likewise, Wings Press is committed to treating the planet itself as a partner. Thus the press uses as much recycled material as possible, from the paper on which the books are printed to the boxes in which they are shipped. All our inks are soy and vegetable based.

New and Forthcoming Titles by Wings Press

After Auschwitz: A Love Story (2014)
Brenda Webster
Two of the 20th century’s terrible A’s collide in this powerful novel—Alzheimer’s Disease and the Auschwitz death camp. Set in Rome in 2010, Renzo, a once brilliant writer and filmmaker, is aware that he is slipping deeper and deeper into the haze of Alzheimer’s. He keeps a journal in which he grapples with his complicated marriage to Hannah, a death camp survivor, as well as with the predominant intellectual currents of the 20th century. Highly lyrical passages elucidate for the reader both his sophisticated anguish and his child-like wonder.

Beneath the Halo (2013)
Celeste Guzmán Mendoza
Beneath the Halo explores various aspects of Mendoza’s experience as a Tejana, bringing to life the landscapes and cultural life of her roots by delving into topics fundamental to her Tejana identity—family, land, faith, and marriage. Known as a “humorously sexy” poet, her insights into coming of age during a period of cultural (and demographic) evolution can be both heart-rending and hilarious.

Between A and Z (2014)
Mo H Saidi
Poems of compassion and passionate observation that begin in Tehran, Iran, and end in San Antonio, Texas, with plenty of stops along the way to observe people, places and nature, and to gather stories. A great storyteller, Saidi’s poems are rich with the lives of people he has met around the globe.

Again for the First Time (2013)
Rosemary Catacalos
The 30th Anniversary edition of Again for the First Time, the award-winning first book of poems by Rosemary Catacalos, the 2013 Poet Laureate of Texas.

El Paso Days (2014)
Elroy Bode
A collection of thoughts, scenes, observations—short essays—written by one of Texas’s finest nature essayists about daily happenings during a typical recent year. Elroy Bode deals—in the context of the natural world around him—with the nature and meaning of life and the inevitable loss of its pleasures, satisfactions, and mysteries. The book ends with a long recounting by the author of the circumstances surrounding the death of his son.

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.

The Pecan Grove Press is currently on indefinite hiatus status. Book orders are no longer available. Please contact the individual authors for book orders.

Pecan Grove Press is not accepting submissions at this time.

Word Design Studio

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

City of San Antonio
Office of Cultural Affairs
and SA♥Arts

Frost
BANKING 
INVESTMENTS 
INSURANCE

Frost Bank - For 145 years
a partner in helping fellow Texans
with their financial needs and a proud
supporter of the arts in Texas

Bruce D. Akright, MD, FACOG
Gynecology and Gynecologic Surgery
North East OB/GYN Associates, PLLC
5000 Schertz Parkway, Suite 100, Schertz, TX 78154
and 502 Madison Oak, Suite 240, SA, TX 78258
210-653-5501
www.NE-OBGYN.com

Bill Miller Bar-B-Q
is a Family Restaurant
Founded in 1953
http://www.billmillerbbq.com

At San Antonio Press

San Antonio PRESS, Inc.
we’re inspired by the belief that one can use print to change the world.
www.sanantoniopressinc.com

YOU KNOW YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS

Frost Bank - For 145 years
a partner in helping fellow Texans
with their financial needs and a proud
supporter of the arts in Texas

Bruce D. Akright, MD, FACOG
Gynecology and Gynecologic Surgery
North East OB/GYN Associates, PLLC
5000 Schertz Parkway, Suite 100, Schertz, TX 78154
and 502 Madison Oak, Suite 240, SA, TX 78258
210-653-5501
www.NE-OBGYN.com

Harmon W. Kelley, MD, FACOG
Margaret A. Kelley, MD, FACOG
Southeast OB-GYN Associates, PA
Southeast Professional Building
4115 E. Southcross, Suite 102
San Antonio, Texas 78222
210-333-0592
www.southeastobgyn.yourmd.com

Becker Vineyards
The 46 acres of French Vinifera vines at Becker Vineyards, located between Fredericksburg and Stonewall, generate 14 different varietals of grapes. Becker Vineyards was established in 1992.
www.beckervineyards.com

Announcing
The HEB Annual Youth Poetry Contest
for school students between 6 and 16 years
for more info and submission:
www.voicesdelaluna.com/submissions/

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

The project Yanaguana: Native River is financially supported by the City of San Antonio Department of Culture and Creative Development

San Antonio Area Foundation
Where Giving and Community Connect

Griffin Asset Management, LLC
New Braunfels, Texas
830-620-1000
www.griffinam.com

Shivers & Shivers Law Practice
http://shiverslaw.com
Shivers & Shivers is a full service immigration and nationality law firm since 1981
frontdesk@shiverslaw.com

Bill Miller Bar-B-Q
is a Family Restaurant
Founded in 1953
http://www.billmillerbbq.com

Shivers & Shivers Law Practice
http://shiverslaw.com
Shivers & Shivers is a full service immigration and nationality law firm since 1981
frontdesk@shiverslaw.com

Bill Miller Bar-B-Q
is a Family Restaurant
Founded in 1953
http://www.billmillerbbq.com

For more than 100 years, our commitment and involvement 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 Charitable Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation.

Announcing
The HEB Annual Youth Poetry Contest
for school students between 6 and 16 years
for more info and submission:
www.voicesdelaluna.com/submissions/

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

Griffin Asset Management, LLC
New Braunfels, Texas
830-620-1000
www.griffinam.com

Shivers & Shivers Law Practice
http://shiverslaw.com
Shivers & Shivers is a full service immigration and nationality law firm since 1981
frontdesk@shiverslaw.com

The project Yanaguana: Native River is financially supported by the City of San Antonio Department of Culture and Creative Development

San Antonio Area Foundation
Where Giving and Community Connect

Griffin Asset Management, LLC
New Braunfels, Texas
830-620-1000
www.griffinam.com

Shivers & Shivers Law Practice
http://shiverslaw.com
Shivers & Shivers is a full service immigration and nationality law firm since 1981
frontdesk@shiverslaw.com

The project Yanaguana: Native River is financially supported by the City of San Antonio Department of Culture and Creative Development

San Antonio Area Foundation
Where Giving and Community Connect

Griffin Asset Management, LLC
New Braunfels, Texas
830-620-1000
www.griffinam.com

Shivers & Shivers Law Practice
http://shiverslaw.com
Shivers & Shivers is a full service immigration and nationality law firm since 1981
frontdesk@shiverslaw.com

The project Yanaguana: Native River is financially supported by the City of San Antonio Department of Culture and Creative Development
**Poetry & Arts Events**

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.

**Mondays 8 pm – San Antonio Writers Forum** – La Taza Coffee House, 15060 San Pedro Ave – (210) 494-8292. Informal sharing and critiquing of poems, short stories, essays. Free and open for participants. Host: Dan at sawriters@gmail.com.

**2nd Tuesdays 7-9 pm – Awaken the Sleeping Poet at the Twig, 200 E. Grayson, Ste. 124, Pearl Brewery (210) 826-6411.**

**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**

“...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.

**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.

**GUADALUPE LUTHERAN CHURCH** – The church is dedicated to the development, preservation, and promotion of Mexican-American arts.

**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.

**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.

**LA VILLITA** – This restored Mexican village captures the charm of the past amid narrow streets and authentic adobe houses with arts and crafts shops.

**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.

**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.

**MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE** – This venue includes exhibits of contemporary Mexican artists.

**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.

**PLAYHOUSE SAN ANTONIO** – Call the box office for tickets and more information: (210) 733-7258.

**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.

**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.

**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, see www.voicesdelaluna.com.

**Voices de la Luna Monthly Literary 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.