

Reposa Inducted into Texas Institute of Letters

Voices de la Luna's poetry editor Carol Coffee Reposa is part of the most recent class of inductees into the Texas Institute of Letters, the premier organization of writers in the state. First convened during the Texas centennial in 1936, TIL honors Texas writers who have made substantial contributions to poetry and literature. Author J. Frank Dobie encouraged the inaugural gathering to focus its writing on Texas itself, remarking, "Great literature transcends its native land, but there is none that I know of that ignores its own soil." Reposa's four books of poetry follow Dobie's advice, featuring poems set in Russia, Western Europe, and Peru, but frequently returning to Texas scenes: Palo Duro Canyon, South Padre Island, the Texas-Mexico border region, and of course San Antonio. Reposa retired from San Antonio College's English department in 2010 after serving 40 years on the faculty. Her "retirement," however, is largely in name only, as she maintains a sometimes frenetic schedule writing, editing, attending literary events, and giving speeches. Her recent speech to the Friends of the San Antonio Public Library, entitled "Why Write?" may be found on p. 29 of this issue. Her induction into TIL is well-deserved.



Robledo Honored as 2016 Macondista



Gerard Robledo, associate editor of *Voices de la Luna*, was recently invited to participate in the 2016 Macondo Writers' Workshop at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. Every year a small number of writers are invited to participate in the workshop, which its website describes as "a master's level workshop, meaning that participants are expected to be

committed and well-seasoned writers capable of reviewing each other's work with compassionate rigor and vision." Robledo recently earned his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Texas at El Paso. He has had poems published in the *Texas Observer*, *The Thing Itself*, the *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Outrage: A Protest Anthology for Injustice in a Post 9/11 World*, and *Voices de la Luna* (translations as well as poetry). One of the cofounding instructors for the San Antonio chapter of Barrio Writers, he is also one of the first sixteen poets to be archived in the newly established San Antonio Poetry Archive at Palo Alto College. Robledo describes his work as follows: "My work as a poet stems from the tradition of the poetry of witness / anthro-poetry, which chronicles the lives of individuals within communities who are affected by racism, ignorance, and injustice. As an advocate for social justice, I believe it is the job of the poet to document events for those who live in fear and oppression, so it can be witnessed, remembered, and understood. It is the poet's duty to speak for the voiceless and show readers what they don't want to see."

Jiménez Wins Poetry Prize

Local poet Joe Jiménez has been awarded the 2016 Letras Latinas/Red Hen Poetry Prize. The Letras Latinas blog made this announcement: "Letras Latinas, the literary initiative at the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Latino Studies, and Red Hen Press, the Los Angeles area literary press, are pleased to jointly announce Joe Jiménez of San Antonio, Texas, as the winner of the Letras Latinas/Red Hen Poetry Prize—an initiative which supports the publication of a second or third book by a Latino/a poet residing in the United States. . . . Joe Jiménez's poetry shimmers with arresting imagery and light, but its beauty is hard-won—a victory song celebrating the bittersweet journey of one who inhabits the queer space inside the Chicano heart. Among the many graces of this book manuscript is that its language feels at home in serene desert vistas and on explosive barrio streets. It recognizes guidance from the living and the dead, and its breath aches with longing and comforts like prayer."



San Antonio Appoints New Poet Laureate

Trinity University professor Jenny Browne has been named San Antonio's third poet laureate, following in the footsteps of Carmen Tafolla and Laurie Ann Guerrero. The two-year position was established by the city in 2012 to encourage the community to appreciate and participate in the literary arts, engaging the public—including school children—in poetry and creative writing. Browne received her master's degree in poetry from the University of Texas in Austin and has worked at Trinity since 2007, where she teaches classes in creative writing, environmental studies, and women and gender studies. She is the author of three poetry collections: *At Once*, *The Second Reason*, and *Dear Stranger*.



Browne says, "Part of a poet's job is to pay closer attention to how it feels to be human. To language and emotion, sure, but also to history, class, race, and landscape. Our city inspires, challenges, and whispers interesting things to me daily. I feel so lucky to get to write about it, and even luckier to be officially charged with thinking about how to make poetry a bigger part of cultural conversations." She will serve as poet laureate from 2016 through 2018.

The tradition of appointing poets laureate of a city or state goes back to the ancient Greeks, who held competitions in poetry, rhetoric, and playwrighting similar to the more well-known athletic competitions. Similar to their athletic counterparts, winners of literary contests were often crowned with a laurel wreath, a symbol of victory, hence the name "laureate." The tradition of crowning poets laureate continued into the Roman period but was discontinued after the empire became Christian, because of poetry's association with paganism. The tradition was revived when Petrarch was crowned poet laureate of Rome in 1341.

