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## A Welcome Letter from the Chair of The Two-Year College Association— Southwest Region



Dear TYCA Southwest Members and Friends:

"Sharing our Culture and Heritage," What an awesome theme for our annual conference! As I reflect on this idea, I recall Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's proclamation in "Letters from an American Farmer," where he states, "from this Promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen...They exhibit a more conspicuous figure in this great and variegated picture," for it is reflective of the variegated picture TYCA Southwest members display with their rich and varied cultural heritage. With our fabulous Chairs Irma Luna and Liz Ann Aguilar at the helm, the 2016 conference will be nothing but an awe-inspiring experience. The San Antonio Riverwalk, with its flavorful and authentic foods, music, shopping mall, and boutiques, is a fit setting to satisfy any palate. The tour of the missions and the Alamo now designated as the First World Heritage Sites, adds a spiritual dimension as well. I hope all of you will join us and partake in the celebration of culture and heritage as we learn new ways to open our students' minds to embrace cultural literacy.

My association with TYCA Southwest has been for almost three decades. When I came to Laredo Community College in 1987, I had the good fortune of working with Dr. Tom Mitchell my Chair, friend, and mentor, who was a strong believer in faculty participation in national and state conventions such as CCCC and TYCA, then SRCE, to keep abreast of the new research in our profession. Actually, my first experience with TYCA was at the Laredo Conference in 1987. Since then, I have chaired the 2010 TYCA Southwest Conference in Laredo, served on the Board as the State Representative and Vice Chair, and have made lasting friendships both professionally and personally. I have to agree with Michael Gos, my friend who accurately described the mystique of TYCA saying, "the unique make up of TYCA Southwest, its informality, and friendliness, encourages interaction among members that run the gamut from personal to professional. Our unique mix of people, our interest in all things English related, and our wider geographic range [six states] combine to make us the best choice for our activities."

The ancient dictum "Know Thyself," inscribed on the forecourt of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, resonates from antiquity to the present. In order to know "self," first we need to understand our heritage. At the 2015 TYCA SW Conference set in the Native American tribal land at the Tamaya Resort in Bernadillo, New Mexico, our theme was "Walking in Two Worlds," ours and our students'. This year our focus is the past, present, and the future, for we walk in multiple worlds. Today, since our world has become a global village, globalization is happening in our cities, counties, and even neighborhoods. Walking in multiple worlds, using multiple intelligences seems to be the next step in our evolution, which we cannot take without understanding and celebrating our culture and heritage. As our students navigate these worlds, as facilitators of learning, let us learn from each other how we must continue to stress the importance of our cultural roots without taking them for granted. I look forward to seeing all of you in San Antonio in October.

Thank you,

Rajkumari Chakuri, Chair TYCA-SW

Brian Anderson serves on the TYCA-SW executive committee and teaches English at College of the Mainland in Texas City.



## What is Poetry and How is it Written?

By D. Brian Anderson

When I teach poetry appreciation to beginning literature students, we begin by considering various definitions of poetry. Students, of course, often consider poetry a frustrating mystery, a kind of collective secret perpetrated and protected by a jealous army of English teachers. They think of poetry as something used to torture students who don't particularly enjoy English class.

I try to gently lead them away from these preconceptions. By sharing with students various definitions of poetry, as voiced by famous poets and critics, I hope to show them that many of the best minds have had trouble deciding how to define the quirky business of poetry. Poetry can be difficult not because it is designed to be tricky or obscure (it really shouldn't be), but because by definition poetry can be mysterious.

Allen Ginsberg seemed to echo this collective sense of ambiguity when he wrote, "Poetry is what poets write" (qtd. in Raskin 206; sometimes attributed to Robert Frost). Unlike students, scholars and poets like Ginsberg tend to embrace the ambiguity and lack of clear boundaries, even while they work in a way that acknowledges the importance of craft and the influence of the writers that came before them.

Poetry concerns itself with metaphorical language and with looking at the world from different angles -- "telling it slant," as Emily Dickinson would say. Sometimes the difference between poetry and fiction can be difficult to see, hence the existence of hybrid forms like the "prose poem" and the "short-short" story. Not all poems rhyme (most modern poems do not rhyme, in fact), and while most modern poems are short, older poems tended to be longer and more complex. Poetry is not a monolith, and poetry is always evolving.

In spite of these caveats, the difference between "poetry" and "prose" in language really shouldn't be too hard to see. It really is a matter of spirit. "Prose" suggests something ordinary and regular, whereas poetry suggests language that creates new meanings and helps the reader to view the world in new ways. Poets take risks and connect experiences in ways that other people would not. Not all of us can be great poets all the time, but any active mind (and practicing writer) can experience glimpses into this sublime type of perception.

In terms of sheer volume, most of my own writing work has been in fiction and nonfiction prose. Nonetheless, I have been driven to write poems occasionally over the years because I needed to say something that could not be said in any other way, and I often get better reactions to my poetry. For me, poems have come out of necessity. As T.S. Eliot is said to have remarked, "What stimulates me to write a poem is that I have got something inside me that I want to get rid of—it is almost a kind of defecation" (tsk, tsk). In a similar way, but more elegantly stated, the poet Denise Levertov writes of poetry as a "cross section, or constellation, of experiences" that "demands" the emergence of the poem ("Some Notes on Organic Form" 68).

So how does one go about writing poems? Like Levertov, I endeavor to allow my poems to take shape organically, both in form and in language; as a matter of process, this means “following the language,” which is perhaps something you have to learn by instinct, since it is difficult to explain. Being attentive to the music of the language is a good start, as is abandoning all agendas.

As Levertov writes, writing organically means paying attention to the “intuitive interaction” between the elements of the poem (“Notes on Organic Form” 69). I equate this with being in the “writer’s zone,” a useful phrase in spite of having become something of a cliché. For me, the decision to write a poem, essay, or story, is dictated by the subject matter; the subject demands a certain form and a certain shape if it is to be fully and satisfactorily realized. This is of course in line with Levertov’s thinking on organic form and her own citation of the famous idea in organic art that “form follows function” (“Notes on Organic Form” 70).

A poem for me results from an intersection of ideas, or obsessions, and Even though “writing is rewriting,” I believe every poem is a revision of sorts, a revision of the poetic spirit and of the writer’s poetics. We keep pushing forward and improving, and every poem gives new shape to the poet’s voice.

#### Works Cited

Levertov, Denise. “Some Notes on Organic Form.” PDF file.

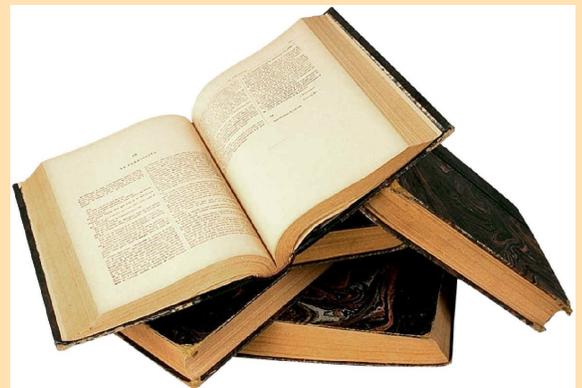
Raskin, Jonah. *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004. *Google Books*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.

“A poem for me results from an intersection of ideas, or obsessions...”

Brian Anderson

**Writer’s Note:** This article was adapted from an “instructor journal” originally distributed to creative-writing students.

*If you wish to submit an article or creative work for publication in TYCA-SW 2017 Newsletter, please contact Toni McMillen [tmcmillen@collin.edu](mailto:tmcmillen@collin.edu) with the submission by March 15, 2017.*



**Tunnel of Fun, San Antonio 1984**  
**By Brian D. Anderson**

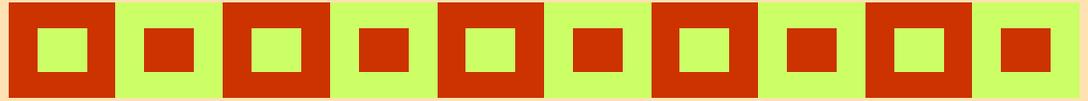
She calls to me as I stand  
in the cool March air, she tries  
to wave me over, to join her  
in the seat next to her, bound  
for the Tunnel of Fun, and yet,

I laugh, and stand there, and watch  
the lap bar close down on her blue-jean-  
covered legs, and the train lurches forward,  
the train runs rip shod  
clickety-clack through my drowsy brain  
and she disappears into the black tunnel  
waving over her shoulder, as she sits alone  
in a seat made for two.

I look up and let the sun wash over my  
15-year-old face, the skin cells feel young  
and absorbent, taking in the heat  
on my cheeks, as I swallow empty air.

And the World's Fair needle touches the blue sky,  
scraping an arc across the dome of time,  
and years pass, and I walk in San Antonio again,  
on the river sidewalks, teeming with tourists,  
crawling over each other like ants in a pile,  
eating pork tacos and drinking Corona beers,  
searching for someone they have lost,  
finding instead thousands of strangers.

The rides beneath the needle are gone,  
as are the paddleboats in the river, to make  
way for the bigger motor tour boats, which  
buzz through the river like mosquitos in  
search of a neck, all those faces in the sun.



# Dia Los Muertos in San Antonio

Late October is a great time to journey to San Antonio. Numerous celebrations for Dia De Los Muertos can be found in and around the city. Just a few blocks from the conference hotel, we will find activities that celebrate art, culture, music, religion, and history. Specifically, on October the 29 and 30, there will be exhibitions, performances, music, and poetry readings at Trader's Village and Little Villita which could provide a fun excursion.

The altars for Dia De Los Muertos are part of the appeal for gathering. Food like tamales, sugary skull shaped treats, and lively beverages are given to friends. Other sentimental items such as pictures of loved ones, and various personal offerings are placed on an altar in honor of those who have passed from this life.

Also while visiting San Antonio, be sure to visit their Spanish colonial missions which were designated as the first United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site in Texas.



## About TYCA-SW

In 1966, the founding members of the Southwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College (SRCE), the original name of TYCA-SW, met in San Antonio, Texas.

Since then, the Conference has met yearly in each one of the six states making up the Southwest Region: in Denver, Little Rock, Bossier City, Hobbs, Oklahoma City, and in various cities in Texas, including Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, Laredo, and Waco.

Members enjoy not only the professional growth of attending the annual conferences but also the personal interaction with old and new friends that sparks enthusiasm, confidence, and solidarity.

Programs feature speakers of regional and national reputation. Host colleges traditionally schedule recreational activities that showcase their cities, such as a walk around the San Antonio Riverwalk or a hiking trail through the mountains and scenic routes of Colorado.

Visit [TYCASW.ORG](http://TYCASW.ORG) for more information.



# SHOW APPRECIATION

NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR TYCA-SW AWARDS 2017

## Robert W. Wyle Service Award

Each year TYCA–SW honors one person for outstanding contributions made to the profession through long–term service. The Wyle Award is our highest distinction. To nominate a colleague for this award, send the nominee’s name and a description of his or her contributions to the profession. You may include comments from others in your nomination as well. Include the information listed below on this form along with any supporting documents.

Go to [tycasw.org](http://tycasw.org) to nominate a colleague for the Robert W. Wyle Service Award and Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award.



## Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award

The Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award is presented at the annual TYCA–SW conference. It honors the memory of Susan Faulkner, professor and coordinator of the English Department at Cedar Valley College in the Dallas County Community College District in Texas. Susan loved teaching, learning, the English language, TYCA–SW, and her grandchildren most of all.

We urge you to nominate a friend or colleague who merits special recognition for his or her hard work and inspired teaching. Send your nominee’s name and a brief description of his or her outstanding work. In addition, you may include brief comments from this individual’s students and peers, if possible.

Nominees must be paid members of TYCA–SW.



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