

Latinidad™ Newsletter – March/April 2005: Poetry

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For lists of agents and editors seeking Latino writers, visit www.marcelalandres.com and click on Writing Opportunities.

1. Saludos

April is Poetry Month. While there are numerous journals that publish individual poems, it can be challenging to publish a book-length collection of poems. Thankfully, there are a number of small publishers that are dedicated to supporting poets. Wings Press, which is featured below, is one example. When seeking a publisher for your collection of poems, focus on smaller or regional publishers instead of large publishers.

Helping Latino writers get published,

Marcela Landres

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2. Editor Q&A

Bryce Milligan is the Publisher/Editor of Wings Press, one of the oldest continually operating small presses in Texas. Wings Press publishes up to 15 titles a year, including a wide array of multicultural poetry, fiction, anthologies, and scholarship. Milligan is also the primary editor of the anthologies *Daughters of the Fifth Sun: A Collection of Latina Fiction and Poetry* and of *¡Floriscanto Sí! A Collection of Latina Poetry*.

Why is Wing Press a great home for Latino writers?

The Dallas Morning News a couple of years ago said that, “at Wings, 'diversity' is about the preservation and propagation of distinctive literature.” That really is true. I certainly don’t limit the focus of the press to Latina/o writing – but I have always found Latino/a literature to be distinctive. I do have to say that for the most part, my heart belongs to Chicano/a literature, at least in terms of what I publish. Even though I edited a couple of the first “all-Latina” anthologies to come from NY houses – *Daughters of the Fifth Sun* (Putnam/Riverhead) and *¡Floriscanto Si: A Collection of Latina Poetry* (Penguin) – I’ve never been comfortable with the implicit melting pot ideology of the term Latino or Latina. But back to the question at hand. Ramón Renteria, the book editor of the El Paso Times, said last year: “Without publishers like Wings, Latino and Chicano literature would remain in a deep well in America.” I think what he was getting at was that presses

like Wings, and Bobby Byrd's Cinco Puntos Press, and others celebrate this literature for what it is and on an equal footing with all our other titles. I have great admiration for most of the old Chicano and Latino presses, but in the mainstream mind there is too often a perception of ghetto-ization when they see a book from a press that is limited to one ethnicity or even one gender. If a title is on the Wings list, then readers know that it is there because of the quality of the writing, the breadth of the imagination, and the intellect. I try to the best of my abilities to publish only books that have those qualities, no matter who the author is. That being said, I must admit that I've never published a Republican to my knowledge.

Which Latino authors has Wings Press published?

It is a long list, actually. Some of our more well known authors are – alphabetically -- Marjorie Agosín, Ana Castillo, Lorna Dee Cervantes, María Espinosa, the journalists Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez, E. A. "Tony" Mares, Cecile Pineda, Raúl Salinas (raúlsalinas), Virgil Suárez, Carmen Tafolla, and Alma Luz Villanueva. Of course there are several other major writers in some of our anthologies. Wings also publishes a lot of first-time authors, mainly poets. For a while we had a prize – the Premio Poesía Tejana – for Texas Latinas under the age of 30. There were seven books in that series, by Greta De Leon, Victoria García Zapata, Celeste Guzmán, Carolina Monsivaís, Nicole Pollentier, Mary Grace Rodriguez, and Frances Treviño. Some others include Wings, Sheila Sanchez Hatch and Deborah Parédez.

I really like publishing great writing that has been or is being overlooked by readers. For example, I republished two of Cecile Pineda's books from the 1980s and 90s – *Face* and *The Love Queen of the Amazon*. A third republication is coming next spring, her novel *Frieze*. I've also published three new works by Cecile: *Fishlight: A Memoir of Childhood* and two extremely innovative "mononovels," *Bardo99* and *Redoubt*. Now, if you don't know Cecile's writing, consider this statement from last September's (2004) *Bloomsbury Review*: "Writers, readers, teachers, and creative writing classes, take note: Cecile Pineda is an American original, a literary treasure, and her prodigiously inventive and important work, finally returning to print in a landmark and long-awaited reissue, deserves a place in the forefront of American literature." By the way, you can expect to hear an interview with Cecile on Latino USA on NPR coming up in the near future.

Wings has three very important Latina titles coming out in the fall of 2004. The first out will be a 200-page collection of poetry by Marjorie Agosín entitled *The Tree of Memory / El árbol de la memoria*. It is a facing page edition, Spanish and English. A musical based on this book will be touring the country in 2005-2006. Next out will be Ana Castillo's first published play, *Psst ... I Have Something to Tell You, Mi Amor*, which is about the rape and torture of Sister Dianna Ortiz at the hands of US-funded and US-directed forces in Guatemala. The third is a serious coup for any publisher interested in Latina literature – Lorna Dee Cervantes' first book in 14 years. *Drive: The First Quartet* is nearly 300

pages of really really powerful poetry. *Drive* will debut with a reading at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 14.

What kinds of manuscripts do you seek?

I have probably published more poetry than is good for any press, so I'm moving more toward fiction and non-fiction for a while. But to answer the question, I'm not "seeking" anything in particular. I know what I will publish when I see it.

How can writers avoid your "Reject" pile and get into your "Pursue" pile?

The first thing is to pick the right publisher for what you are writing. I get an enormous number of romance novel submissions, for example, and just a glance at the website will indicate that this is one of the last things on earth I would publish. Actually reading a book or two from the press and mentioning them in your cover letter is an excellent thing to do.

Don't send me an entire book. It won't get read and it is a waste of good trees. I prefer to get an informative cover letter with just a few poems or one or two chapters, and I prefer to get them by e-mail first. If I am interested, I'll ask for more. Also, as the website says, Wings does not publish poets who do not read poetry. You wouldn't believe how often that happens. Something else that will get my attention in a cover letter is a clear indication of how active the writer is when it comes to giving readings, going to book fairs and conferences, all that. New authors sometimes do not understand that a publisher is not automatically a booking agency. Except in special circumstances where the sales are likely to be substantial, we do not arrange or pay for book tours. Think about how many books one has to sell just to pay for an average airplane ticket. But the single most important thing is to interest me with both the cover letter and the sample.

Other than honing their craft, what is the smartest step writers can take to become happily published?

"Successfully" is a relative term here. Beyond the satisfaction of publishing a good book, for the publisher, success is necessarily measured in sales, reviews, awards, etc., but mainly sales. For the author, it could be that "success" simply means another book on their shelf, or perhaps it is the thing that puts them over the line in pursuit of university tenure, or perhaps it is just about getting a good critical response. The author expects royalties, but no one should reasonably expect to be able to live off the royalties from a regional publisher. On the other hand, my authors can buy their own books on credit at a 50% discount, then go out and sell them at their non-bookstore events such as readings and lectures at schools and other organizations, conferences and book fairs, etc. One of my authors does at least two educational conferences a month, and at each she sells 50 books or more. For a \$16 book, that means she is making about \$400 per event in book sales, plus her honorarium. As I said above, the author must be actively involved in promoting the book. I have rejected numerous authors with five or six books to their credit, many trailing awards, because when I call up their other publishers and ask the

crucial question -- “Do their books sell?” – I am told that the author doesn’t help to push the book. I do not think that many regional publishers have any illusions of getting rich in this business. Almost all of us plow a significant portion of the “profits” right back into the next book. So “success” requires effort on everyone’s part, but the author most of all.

Send submissions to: Bryce Milligan, Wings Press, 627 E. Guenther, San Antonio, TX 78210 or milligan@wingspress.com

Wings Press web site: www.wingspress.com

More Editor Q&A <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id60.htm>

3. Author Spotlight

E.A. “Tony” Mares has published extensively in English and Spanish as a poet, translator, essayist, playwright, fiction writer, journalist, and historian. His poetry and fiction have been published nationally and internationally in Frank, Prairie Schooner, Blue Mesa Review, and many other publications. He is the author of several books, including *With the Eyes of a Raptor*, an intellectually wide-ranging and emotionally engaging poetry collection.

Which author or book inspires you, and why?

Actually, there are many. Miguel de Cervantes inspires me with his *Don Quijote* because his characters inform us that all humans are worthy of appearing in great literature and being treated with respect, dignity, and a gentle humor, not just the well-born and the high and mighty. Jaime Sabines, Pablo Neruda, Angel Gonzalez, Lorca, Yeats, Gabriela Mistral, Borges, and many, many others have written poetry that has inspired me to achieve what I can with this wonderful and demanding art form. Speaking in very general terms, these poets along with others, to mention only a few, such as Czeslaw Milosz, Charles Simic, James Dickey, Roethke, Auden, Pound, Williams, and Heaney have explored poetry as a source for personal truth that transcends the social lies of politicians. I read voraciously and internationally and that is one thing I think a poet should do.

Why do you love to write?

I am most alive when I write. Like any other person, I am always in contact with nature. How can it be otherwise until the day we die? But while I live, my greatest sense of contact with the world, with all of it, from the greatest cosmic reaches to the subatomic strings that are said to compose quarks, from the largest stellar objects to those smaller than the Planck length and the Planck time, occurs when I am deep inside a poem inside myself. Every poem is for me a new cosmos to explore, virgin territory never seen quite the same way before, experienced quite the same way, as I am experiencing it. This is what happens to me when I write and that is why I love this activity, this way of being.

How did you meet your agent?

I do not have an agent and as a poet I seriously doubt that I need one. However, I write essays, fiction, memoir, and at some point I might want to have an agent. Given American publishing conditions, for most genres an agent is probably a good idea.

What is your writing ritual?

I've never met a morning I didn't want to sleep through. Basically, I'm a night person. I like to work late morning with a cup of coffee either at home or in a favorite coffee shop, writing longhand. I take a nap in early afternoon, then I am charged up to work at least until midnight. At home, I usually work at my computer, sometimes with good streaming music in the background, depending on my mood and what I am writing. I will write at set, forced-pace hours when either inspiration or the dread of approaching deadlines strikes me.

Other than honing their craft, what advice would you give to Latino writers looking to land a book deal?

Hone your craft, read widely, and steep yourself in your cultural roots. There is an *americano* dream, despite Samuel P. Huntington's claims to the contrary. Latino cultures were forged out of both incorporation of European elements and indigenous resistance to them. Try to see the world through your non-European eyes, your indio eyes, to get a more holistic vision of your cosmos. When you have your collection of poems, essays, or short stories, or your novel, then study publication market realities very seriously and methodically. Do that, and if you write well, you should be able to find the kind of support you want for your writing career. Agents and publishers have an intelligent self-interest in wanting to publish good writers, but you have to pull your own weight in terms of writing your very best – and that, I believe, is a lifetime commitment. If you are a poet, welcome to the company of loners. Write your poems, take creative writing classes if possible (but they are not necessary), attend workshops, readings, and study the poetry publishing possibilities. If you write well enough, and honestly, your poems will find a market, even in America.

Read reviews: www.wingspress.com

Obtain *With the Eyes of a Raptor*: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0930324587/marcelalandre-20/102-7977679-5168148?%5Fencoding=UTF8&camp=1789&link%5Fcode=xm2>

Click here for more Author Spotlights: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id58.htm>

4. Upcoming Workshops

4/16 -- How to Pitch Your Book Idea/What Editors Really Want Workshops

WHAT: Two workshops:

How to Pitch Your Book Idea

Pitching a book idea in a single sentence is an essential skill most writers lack, and one they especially need in order to impress agents and editors at writing conferences. Topics discussed include: why pitching is important; how to formulate a winning pitch; and the three most common mistakes writers make when pitching their book idea.

What Editors Really Want

Writers who master the business of publishing are more likely to be successfully published than writers who only master the craft of writing. Topics discussed include: why writing conferences are a better investment than M.F.A. programs; the supreme importance of a platform; and the three most common mistakes writers make when dealing with editors.

In addition, I will conduct one-on-one manuscript review sessions.

WHEN: How to Pitch Your Book Idea - 9am, April 16
What Editors Really Want - 2pm, April 16

WHERE: The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Spring Writers Festival, UWM School of Continuing Education, 161 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI

REGISTER: Visit <http://cfprod.imt.uwm.edu/sce/course.cfm?id=6774>

QUESTIONS?: Contact Anne O'Meara, Program Director, aomeara@uwm.edu, 414-227-3311

Invite me to speak for your organization: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id49.htm>

List of upcoming workshops: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id22.htm>

5. Writing Opportunities

When you contact these organizations, please mention that you were referred by the Latinidad™ Newsletter. Thank you, and let me know what happens.

TRUE POET MAGAZINE SEEKS POEMS

Send up to five of your very best poems each month to

submissions@truepoetmagazine.com. We select and publish the top ten poems out of two hundred or so that are submitted each month. We accept submissions through the 25th of the month for the following month's issue. Include a short bio and a link to your personal poetry website. Only writers whose work has been accepted for publication will hear from us, by the 28th of the current month. For more information visit <http://www.truepoetmagazine.com>

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STAN AND TOM WICK POETRY PRIZE

Deadline: May 1

A prize of \$2000 and publication by Kent State University Press is given annually for a first book of poems. Poets who have not published a full-length collection may apply. For more information visit <http://dept.kent.edu/wick/>.

HISPANIC WRITER AWARD

Deadline: May 1

For fiction, non-fiction, or poetry. Open to any New Mexican resident of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish heritage. For more information visit <http://www.unm.edu/~taosconf>.

AWP CONFERENCE SEEKS LATINO PROPOSALS

Deadline for proposals: May 1

The Association of Writing Programs will hold its annual conference in 2006 in Austin, Texas and they are requesting proposals for events focusing on Latino Literature in the U.S. The conference attracts more than 4,000 attendees and more than 250 publishers. For more information visit <http://www.awpwriter.org>.

BOULEVARD EMERGING POETS CONTEST

Deadline: May 15

An annual prize of \$1,000 and publication in Boulevard will be given for a group of three poems by a poet who has not yet published a book of poetry with a nationally distributed press. Send an SASE or e-mail for complete guidelines. Boulevard, Emerging Poets Contest, PMB 325, 6614 Clayton Road, Richmond Heights, MO 63117; Richard Burgin, Editor, ballymon@hotmail.com

GIVAL PRESS OSCAR WILDE AWARD CONTEST

Deadline: June 27

Prize: \$100 for the best previously unpublished poem about GLBT life, any style, any length in English. Reading fee: \$5 per poem. For details email: givalpress@yahoo.com or visit: www.givalpress.com. Or write: Gival Press, PO Box, 3812, Arlington, VA 22203.

LATINA LETTERS CONFERENCE

Date: July 14-16

Conference on Latina literature and identity, sponsored by St. Mary's University and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, TX. Featuring Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, among others. For more information and to register visit <http://www.guadalupeculturalarts.org>.

LATINO SHORT FICTION ANTHOLOGY

Deadline: September 1

Dan Olivas is editing an anthology of short fiction by Latinos/as in which the City of Los Angeles plays an integral role. He seeks provocative stories on virtually any subject by both established and new writers. For guidelines and more information visit www.danielolivas.com and click on News.

SEEKING MEXICAN TRANSLATOR RAFAEL ZAVALA PINON

Liliana Valenzuela, a highly respected and talented translator, is looking for the Mexican translator by the name of: Rafael Zavala Piñón who translated into Spanish the novel "Chicano" by the late author Richard Vásquez (English original pub. in 1970); Spanish translation pub. in México in 1972 by: Editorial Novaro, S.A. a.k.a. Organización Editorial Novaro, S.A. Their former address: Calle 5, no. 12, Naucalpan de Juárez, Estado de México. In addition to the "Chicano" novel, Editorial Novaro seems to have published a lot of comic books in the 1980s. The publisher is no longer in business (it was perhaps bought by another company or just faded from existence). In the fall, Rayo (a division of Harper Collins) will reissue the 1970 novel in a deluxe 35th anniversary paperback edition, and they would subsequently like to publish it in Spanish, but they need to find either the translator or a vestige of the company to secure the rights in Spanish. Any leads would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Liliana Valenzuela at malinche@sbcglobal.net.

LATINO BOOKS MONTH

In its ongoing efforts to promote books by and for Latinos, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) has designated May 2005 as the second annual "Latino Books Month." During the month-long celebration, booksellers, librarians, and others in the book industry will encourage people in their communities to read books by and for Latinos, in both English and Spanish. For more information visit <http://www.publishers.org/>.

NOMINATE WWW.MARCELALANDRES.COM

If you like my web site, www.marcelalandres.com, please nominate it for Writer's Digest Magazine's "The Best 101 Websites for Writers" for 2005. Send nominations to writersdig@fwpubs.com with "101 Sites" in the subject line and include a brief note explaining how the web site has helped you; I thank you in advance for your nominations.

CONSULTATIONS

I provide developmental editing for book manuscripts and critiques for book proposals. In addition, I offer strategic advice on how to launch and maintain a successful writing career. If you are interested in a consultation, please fill out the questionnaire here <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id48.htm> or by visiting www.marcelalandres.com and clicking on Consultations.

POST AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN LATINIDAD™

E-mail announcements about contests, calls for submissions, conferences, jobs, book publications, literary events, etc., to marcelalandres@yahoo.com.

BACK ISSUES

All back issues are available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marcelalandres/>.

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If so, forward it to friends and colleagues. If not, take the Newsletter Survey on my web site <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id59.htm> and tell me what doesn't work and why.

For more writing opportunities, including calls for submissions, contests and conferences, visit www.marcelalandres.com and click on Writing Opportunities.

“Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is a painting that speaks.”--Simonides

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