Latino Flavor

Poems with a Latin Influence

Carl Lahser

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 6102 Royal Breeze

 San Antonio, TX 78239

 (210) 657-5139

 clahser@satx.rr.com

 pretesepress.com

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Toral Tripping Asia

Total Tripping Mexico

Total Trripping Alaska to Argentina

**Growing up in deep South Texas, living in San Antonio, and traveling in Mexico and South America has resulted in some poems with a Latin flavor. Many of my friends have been Latino or biracial and discussions have generated ideas for poems. Enjoy.**

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**1**

**How’s Your Que Dice (kay-DE-see) Today?**

“How’s your que dice today?”

Each morning my father

To my mother would say

Each early morning

As together they lay

“How’s your que dice today?”

“How’s your que dice today?”

Early each morning

of every day

To all of us kids and all of his friends

Here’s what my father would say,

“How’s your que dice today?”

So now, los estimados,

I say it to you,

“How’s your que dice today?”

“What you know?” “ How’s it going?”

“How’s the world treating you?”

“How’s your que dice today?”

+++

**2**

**A Man with Dreams**

He sat at a stop light

Waiting for a green light

Smiling at other drivers

Macho man with a dream

Clean shaven

Freshly ironed western shirt

Sleeves rolled down

Cuffs buttoned

Slim cut jeans

Wide belt and large silver buckle

Polished Chihuahua cowboy boots

With pointed toes and silver caps

New straw western hat

Shading a lined brown face

Sun grown squint

Hands brown and calloused

Dreaming of a cherry red

Dual wheel diesel pickup

With chrome wheels and running board

Twin chrome exhaust pipes

The light turned green

He pushed the old blue bicycle

And began pedaling

Along the bicycle lane.

 +++

**3**

**A LITTLE TEXMEX HERE, A LITTLE SPANGLISH THERE**

Cuidado, Jaime. No se ver that car?

Venir corriendo right now

Antes que give you aplastar!

Arrepentido, Momma.

+++

**Blueprint for un jubilado**

**I woke up with the sun**

**the beginning of year 77.**

**I was up but the sun**

**was still hiding**

**Behind jet stream clouds**

 **blowing in from Mexico**

**For breakfast**

**The panaderia down the street**

**Sold me a small tres Leches cake.**

**en mi jardin**

**I put on A Jazz TAPE**

**sliced the cake**

**squeezed a glass of cold orange juice**

**And sang Happy unBirthday to me**

**A blue jay joined in**

**Along with a Monarch butterfly**

**heading south for the winter.**

**The sun broke out**

**Heralding a good, good new year.**

+++

**4**

**The Belem Market, Peru**

People everywhere in the cool of dawn,

produce to market and products back home

carried on the backs or heads of Indians and Creoles

before it gets hot and the sun, humidity and flies rise.

Displayed on palm leaf mats, everything you need-

fish, chicken, rice, bananas, voodoo charms

and they can fix your motorbike too.

**+++**

**The Lima Bread Man**

A lone old man on a three wheel bicycle

sold cheap bread

from the basket on the bike

at a floating price of a nickel a loaf.

The peons stood in line

from seven until nine

for price supported bread

at two cents for rye and barley rolls

At nine AM the price went up

to what ever the market would bear

The man on the bike sold out

And went home.

+++

**Cinco de Mayo**

The fifth of May

celebration of a Mexican revolution

transmutation of the violence into a party

The reasons for the war are largely forgotten

but praise be to any war that gives us a holiday.

Viva Cerveza!

+++

**5**

Donde

It’s cool man

A Sarah Vaughn LP

With clicks and scratching

Lighting by candles

Where are you?

A sparkling spring day

Walking through bouganvilla blooms

Under a wild blue sky

Across a wooden bridge over a roiling creek

Where are you?

A tropical sunset paints the sky

Pina coladas

Lobsters sizzling on the parrilla

Tropicbirds circling homeward

Donde?

Where are you?

+++

**Houston Street at 4 AM in July**

Its sticky and cool

every bench sleeps at least

one homeless body.

Almost no traffic

but the signals work religiously.

+++

##### Grackle Love

On the highest branch of a cottonwood along the River Walk

A gleaming black great-tailed grackle perched

Swaying in the breeze, he sang

Sang to challenge any other golden-eyed male

Several other grackles strutted

Pecking and ignoring but occasionally looking at the singer.

+++

**6**

**GROWING UP, GROWING OLD**

I grew up broke.

Doing without.

Making do.

Frugal.

I still don’t like to spend.

I indulge myself

On occasion as a treat

New shoes or a new jacket

Replacing my ten year old pickup.

Traveling tourist.

A fancy meal for my birthday.

I see people

Inflated with self-importance.

A legend in their own mind,

Indulging in the latest fads of food and fashion,

Maintaining a fragile lifestyle,

Diminishing themselves.

Sometimes I get envious

But usually I’m a make-do dinosaur,

A throwback to my frugal, hard working roots.

Surviving.

Aging gracefully.

+++

**7**

**MIND PICTURES**

I'll paint a picture from my mind -

the most desirable face in womankind;

a sexy philosopher with an orderly mind;

luscious boobs and a pert behind -

on a canvas of silk oh so fine.

Then I'll look and see what I can find

remembering that looks are just the rind.

+++

**The Mocking Bird**

The first morning in Oaxaca City

I heard someone whistling

As the sky began to lighten

I looked out of my window

And saw a caged mocking bird

Doing the Aggie fight song

Whistling at make believe girls

Mocking dove and grackles

It sang all day and into the night

When it was finally covered

Strange songs for a captive bird

Not having wild birds to imitate.

+++

**8**

**NIGHT SKIES**

There are still night skies,

Black with twinkling stars

And shooting stars on cool evenings.

Full moon nights

With a bluish sky

Where scattered thin clouds

Below the moon

Looked dark and

Those above the moon

Glowed - luminous cream-colored wisps.

Fifty years ago

The night sky of San Antonio

Was like that.

The city has grown and

The night sky has changed.

Thirty years ago

The black sky

And the stars disappeared.

The night sky

Turned to a white glow

From the reflected blue

Of mercury vapor lights.

Now the sky is orange and pink.

Halogen lights

That protects our parking lots

And lead our freeway traffic

Through smoggy haze of exhaust fumes

Reflect from the overcast.

Darkness and stars overhead

Have become rare and precious,

A treasure we pay dearly to be without .

+++

**9**

**Night**

Night enters quietly through my window

Framed in velvet blackness of the walls

it seems to make only a dent in the inner darkness

This night is 1% starlight

3% light of a sliver moon

20% stray ribbons of coolness

10% sounds of a distant train

66% rustling of unseen night life

Barely illuminating pictures hanging on the wall

framed views of an alien world of light

snapshots of people and lighted landscapes

alien to the night that sucks up all but the frame

Perhaps I should go out into the night

Bathe in the night

Inhale the song of a mockingbird atop a mesquite tree

Join unseen life in the night

Instead of lying awake

Immersed in darkness

Warm and waiting for the dawn

+++

**10**

**The Malecon (Seawall)**

Along the malecon

flew squadrons of Pelicans in tight formation

past the seahorse statue.

Kids sat dangling their feet over the seawall

eating green mangoes

Across the street stood a Huicol Indian shop

selling bead-covered animals.

An icecream vendor leaned on his cart

peering in the window.

Beyond the church was the zocalo

rincon de viejo, the old men’s corner,

was marked by a shoeshine throne

with raised metal footrests -

a shoeshine while watching the girls.

Tourists in shorts and big hats

walk the malacon

watching the pelicans

and eating icecream.

+++

**11**

**Peanut Man from Todos Santos**

Whooeeete

Whooeeete

In the dusk

Out of the gathering night

Whooeeete

Hola!

Jola! Jola!

Cacahuetes caliente!

Cacahuetes picante!

(Peanuts hot and spicy)

Dogs howl

Children gather to follow the peanut man

Through warm dusty streets

Un centavo here

Dos centavos there

The small black steam engine

Is pulled along the village streets

His route ends at the town’s cantina

Where he sells most of his cacahuetes

And washes the dust from his throat

With a cerceza fresco

A nice cold beer.

+++

**12**

**Picture on a Pony**

In the zocalo in Saltillo

on Easter Sunday afternoon

after church

families walk around

enjoy an ice cream

sit in the shade of the Palo Blanco trees

waiting for the fotografiar

with his wooden horse

serapes and charro hats

big bellow camera on a wooden tripod.

He arrives and the children gather

Chacho in a sombrero!

Maria in a flowery falda!

Photographs for Abuelita

Pictures for a hundred years.

+++

**Surfers Morning**

The surf is up south of Puerto Escondido

Fifteen foot waves rise half a mile from shore.

Serious surfers are on the waves at sunup.

By ten AM beautiful bodies with surf boards

Cruise the beach making muscles for the girls

As pelicans and gulls dive down.

The day gets warm.

European female tourists get topless

in spite of prudish Mexican laws.

The sky turns a faded blue near noon.

The real surfers and clouds have long disappeared

and its even too hot to be topless.

+++

**13**

**That Strange Red Thing in the Heart of San Antonio**

There is a strange red modern sculpture

In a traffic circle

In the heart of San Antonio

It sits where

the Lucasse hat and boot store once stood

cater-corner from

the old Joskes Department Store

across the river from

Casa Rio Mexican Restaurant

looking like a bent corkscrew

boring for oil

+++

**Tortilla Making**

Gather the wood and stoke the *parrilla*.

Mix the dough of flour, lard, and water.

Make a quarter-size ball of dough.

Put it in the tortilla press between sheets of wax paper.

Close and operate the press.

Peel off the tortilla and spin and pat the tortilla larger.

Put it on the *parrilla* but don’t catch your sleeve on fire.

Turn it over and press out the bubbles.

Remove and eat.

+++

**14**

Three Ice Cold Beers

The 1961 sun rolled off the hood in shimmering sheets

that crawled through the vent at 140 degrees.

The three of us were about to melt

July heat had beaten us to our knees.

The two lane concrete highway shivered

and the top of on coming traffic dripped

the rest of the vehicle onto the road

and the last of our lukewarm water was sipped.

Then the first house on the outskirts of Freer crept by

as civilization reared its beautiful head

and we parked by a restaurant near the town's blinking light

near the railroad station and a packing shed.

A rusty screen door had a painted orange comet

that advertised Rainbo Bread.

We opened the screen door and entered the shade

and for the moment the heat had fled.

The wooden screen door slammed behind us twice

and a cat on the counter raised its head and glared.

We took a table under a grumbling ceiling fan

and asked what the cook had prepared.

The waitress, who must have been all of fourteen,

said, "The chili is good today."

So we ordered a bowl of chili and an ice-cold beer

and listened to the jukebox play.

The chili came with two slices of bread,

half an onion and a pickle spear.

We each got a glass of crushed ice

and a brown bottle of warm Shiner Bock beer.

The chili and beer, the cat and the song -

lunch was over much too soon.

We were back on the hot concrete ribbon

heading east to Corpus towards a half-full moon.

+++

**15**

**TIME, SHE HAS CHANGED**

It was once that any time my hand

touched her thigh

or caressed her hip

or stroked her breast

that my Chica would roll over

and satisfy my manly needs.

I am still macho and the need is still there

but time, she has changed.

Mi Chica, now she acts like the gringas

I knew when I played Sancho.

The gringas often said "No"

and would fight like they meant "No".

Now when I touch mi Chica it is like a spark.

It makes her jump away like my hand was hot.

I am still macho and I still have my needs

but many times I am left like a stallion stud

on a hot summer day

with his macanudo displayed

just cooling himself.

Time and mi Chica, they are changing.

Sancho is getting old and the gringas,

they say "No" more often .

And they want me to wear a raincoat when I take a shower.

But they don't understand that I am macho

and must feel my pleasure.

They think I must change like the time.

But I am macho.

+++

**16**

**Tropical Fisherman**

A lone fisherman,

his brown body burned darker yet by the sun

bare footed,

in shorts and New York Jets T-shirt

walks the beach in the false dawn

with a castnet

draped over his left shoulder

at the ready.

Two quick steps into the surf

and the shapeless net

springs like a snake

its large, round mouth biting the sea.

Net sounds -

a small thunk of weights thrown hard at the water,

a slerissh sound as the netting cuts the surface

a quiet hiss tiny bubbles breaking.

Restrained by the rope on his wrist the net settles.

Retrieved, the net contains silver flashes

in the folds of the net.

The fisherman is silently thankful for the

bounty and beauty of the sea.

+++

**17**

**TWO GRACKLES**

**Grackle Spring**

Those big shiny black

birds are back

standing like ebony lawn ornaments

tail down

beak reaching for the sky

stretching their necks so much

their feet almost leave the ground.

+++

**Grackles in the Mist**

Two male grackles in the mist

shiny black with golden eyes

sitting on adjacent fence posts

displaying

intimidating each other

until the one on the higher post wins.

+++

**WEST SIDE ONE**

The old man sits on the front steps

of the white shiplap house

on south Alamo St,

the housewhere he grew up.

He sits and listens

to the summer cicada in the hackberry tree

and the rumble of trucks and busses.

He is comfortable in a plain white T-shirt

and a weeks growth of white beard.

His bad fitting dentures sit in the kitchen.

He and the house are getting old.

+++

**18**

**Zaguan lives in Nuevo Casa Grande**

The plaster was coming off an old adobe wall

An arch became visible – a zaguan

A large arched gate and portico

to allow stock and wagons inside the wall

to deliver hay and other cargo

to rooms off the courtyard inside the wall

The plaster was removed.

The zaguan exposed and restored

A zaguan gate with a walk-thru door was found

**The zaguan lives**.

+++





