

# Barrio Beat

A Literary Magazine // Revista de Literatura

Volume 01  
Issue 01



# The Street Sings



With Work From:

Stella Pope Duarte

beck louis

Gloria Guadalupe Renteria

DesiRay Salas

Julio Ajin Mutz

# Editorial Collective

**Fiction Editor** Arturo Magaña  
**Nonfiction Editor** Taylor R. Genovese  
**Poetry Editor** Jesus Ayala

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### SUBMISSIONS

Barrio Beat particularly encourages emerging artists from diverse backgrounds to submit their work.

Information about submitting can be found on our website.

[barriobeatmagazine.com](http://barriobeatmagazine.com)  
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**Front Cover Image** Arturo Magaña

**Back Cover Image** Taylor R. Genovese

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# Contributors

Multi-award winning author, **Stella Pope Duarte**, is recognized as an “author who will enlarge humanity.” Her numerous awards include the American Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize nomination. Her nationally acclaimed novel, Let Their Spirits Dance, (HarperCollins 2002) honors Latinos who fought and died in the Vietnam War.

**beck louis** is a bodyworker, a dancer, and a poet who left the high desert for the places between the city and the sea.

**Julio Ajin Mutz** was born in the municipality of San Pedro Sacatepequez, Guatemala, in 1982. He is a self-taught sculptor who attended the National School of Arts, ENAP, in 1999 and 2000. There, he earned first prize in sculpture. Later, in 2001, he apprenticed with sculptor Oscar Rios. Between 2003 and 2011, he studied with terracotta, earthenware materials. He has participated in various anthropological research projects, particularly in the areas of forensic anthropology, ethnohistory, and colonial and Pre-Hispanic archaeology. He earned a graduate degree in archaeology from the University of Guatemala, San Carlos.

**Gloria Guadalupe Renteria** was born in Sonora, Mexico and immigrated to the United States at the age of two. In her youth, she traveled with her family to northern California following the agricultural seasons to various migrant camps. She is a single parent to an amazing young adult man in the spectrum—her son is the source of her inspiration and motivation. She lives in Yuma, Arizona.

**DesiRay Salas**, ordinary girl, everyday problems. She paints pictures with words when things are too hard to explain. Little did she know words would become her savior. Salas is just a girl trying to save the world.

# Editor's Note

**Arturo Magaña**

**Fiction Editor**

My name is Arturo, and I live in Somerton, in southwestern Arizona. My father's side of the family settled here in the 1960s. They came as Bracero contract laborers.

I remember my grandmother. She worked in the vegetable packing plants in Yuma, and she raised eleven children. She was a wonderful cook. She would make a large pot of caldo de res on Saturdays. And on Sundays, she wore a black veil for mass. We would walk to church, to the groceries. We walked everywhere, in those days.

My grandfather worked in the citrus groves. In the cotton fields and in the furrows in the dust and plowed earth. It is still winter here, now. The citrus groves stick in my nose. I never met my grandfather, because he was killed in those groves ten years before I was born.

But there are still fingerprints. I still see him. Hear his voice in other voices. He planted seeds and grafted trees. You know, if you graft tangerines and grapefruits, you will receive tangelos. Everyone leaves fingerprints, plants their seeds for others to share in their fruits.

We hope these pages, and our future pages, will be useful to others. To share work that tells truth in diverse ways. And to provide fruit to conversations and feeling, like the people around us do.

We are excited to present the work of five artists for our first issue in the following pages. And, because words and stories mean different things to different people, we will not preface their work in any way. We hope you enjoy their work as much as we do.

A line from Pedro Infante comes to me, "Las veredas quitarán, pero la querencia cuándo..."



# Dying Man

DesiRay Salas

These are not hands of a working man  
No, these are hands of a dying man  
The work is so bad  
The bosses don't question who you are or your past  
No, they only care about how hungry you truly are  
How many nights have you stayed up praying to God?  
You see the work they have isn't made for the weak  
Because the work they have will be your last  
It's the kind of work you die and the next person rolls you over and continues doing your job  
There is no promotion here or sick leave  
No days off or vacation  
No one cares if you're tired  
Because the dying man is too busy making the rich man rich  
He has no time to spare  
Because the dying man is busy digging his grave

# The Day I Was Born

**Stella Pope Duarte**

When I was born my mother said the sky was turquoise blue, turquoise blue, como el manto de la Virgen de Guadalupe, and on the mountain tops in the distance there was snow.

It was November. The air was icy cold. My mother was in the backyard cutting roses—huge roses, red, white, yellow like the roses on la tilma de Juan Diego, and the sky was turquoise blue, como el manto de la Virgen de Guadalupe, and on the mountain tops in the distance there was snow.

Then a soft, warm wind began to blow, yes a warm wind from the east, and my mother said that I fluttered in her womb like I had wings! And that was a good sign because the east is where the sun rises and where everything good begins. The soft, warm wind blew over my mother, over her hair, her face, her arms, her breasts, her legs, and she took a deep breath to smell the fragrance of the roses she held in her hand, and she said that when she took a breath, I took one too and we both breathed in together, then I got very still like the trees all around her that had dropped their leaves to the ground. That is the way it is when birth is about to begin. Everything is waiting for the miracle.

Later that day, my mother went into the kitchen and made herself una taza de manzanilla, a cup of tea to soothe herself, and me in the womb.

Then my father came home from work, and they called the doctor. The doctor was a black man who had an office downtown.

And just before my mother lay down in the same bed she slept in to give me birth, she looked out the window and the sky was turquoise, blue como el manto de la Virgen de Guadalupe, and the sun was setting in the west. The rays of the setting sun were like orange fingers meeting the turquoise sky. Orange was my mother's favorite color. And that was a good sign because the west is where everything good ends.

My mother lay down in her bed and when the pain got hard, she reached over her head and held onto the metal rails of her bed. My father had tears in his eyes. He couldn't stand to see her pain.

My mother said when I was born, I gave a yelp like a new-born pup! I was born into the hands of a black man. He placed me gently at my mother's side. Later that night when everyone was asleep and the house was quiet, my mother got up, very slowly with me in her arms. She walked to the window and looked out, and the sky was black as ink. It shone with a million stars. In the center was the moon, a silver disc shining in the sky, a silver disc, como una medalla de la Virgen de Guadalupe. The night was so clear my mother could see the mountains on the moon and the

craters sunk into the ground.

"Look mijita, there," she said, "There's the letter of your name in the sky, and she took her finger and traced an "S" in the stars, Stella. "Yes, and look right next to it is the letter of my name "R" she traced it with her finger, "R", Rosanna. See, our names are written in the heavens, en el cielo. And that was a good sign because heaven is where God is, and that's where we all begin. ♦



**Rosanna Pope Duarte**  
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# A Gift and A Blessing

Gloria Guadalupe Renteria

The first time I heard English spoken, I was five years old. My aunt put me in front of a classroom and said, “Métete, ándale, métete.” I looked at her and was hesitant to go in. All the other children were going in with their mothers except me. My Mom had three younger children to take care of at home and did not know how to drive. My father was gone, as he did from spring to autumn, to follow the crops to California. I slowly walked into my classroom, opened the door, and peeked in first. I saw small tables, small chairs, and many materials for children. The door closed behind as I entered and a beautiful lady approached me and said, “¡Hola! Soy Miss Valdez. ¿Cómo te llamas?” I said, “Gloria.” She said, “Come and see all the toys we have or maybe you want to color?” I just stood there. I had heard those sounds before on the television, but never understood them. Miss Valdez noticed my confusion, because I did not move, but my eyes were staring at the beautiful brand new crayon boxes on the table in front of me. She finally spoke to me in Spanish and I quickly walked over to the table and began to color. My first experience with English was not bad, but it was just the beginning.

The following year, in first grade, I had Mrs. Orines. It was very difficult for all Mexican children not laugh and whisper “Mrs. Miados.” She was a Filipino lady that seemed to be always mad at children; personally, I think she figured out why we were

laughing. I understood some words in English, but I did not know how to write or read English. Mrs. Orines took care of that very quickly! She would have six children sit at a kidney-bean-shaped table and she sat in front of us, in the middle.

**"English . . . a language so different from my mother tongue, with its silent K's and harsh H's, vowels sounding different even after following the rules, and the pronunciations of words that are written one way and spoken another or written differently and pronounced the same as others."**

We all had our reading books and she gestured and said in English for us to point at the words. As she read the words, she wanted us to move our little fingers to the same words she was reading, but on our own books. I was

confused, but somehow I figured it out. She then grabbed a long pointer stick and set it on the table. She began to read and move her finger, so I mimicked all her actions with my finger, going from word to word, but my friend Maria did not and WHAM! Mrs. Orines slammed the long pointer stick on her little finger. Mrs. Orines began to yell at us. We all knew what to do next—mimic her finger with our fingers, on each word in our book.

I do not have very many happy memories of how I learned English, but I learned it! Maybe, the extreme and harsh teaching styles of Mrs. Orines scared me into learning it fast. Spanish was different, I remember everything about learning to write, read, and speak Spanish. Around the same time I started primary school and, because my Mom was usually pregnant and at home, she taught me Spanish. I still remember the smell of the flour tortillas cooking while I sat on the floor and she taught me how to write “Mama, Papa, Tata, and Nana.” I learned the ABC’s in Spanish when I was about four and how to write them. I was a fast learner, so knowing that the sounds of the Spanish alphabet stay true to the letter, reading and writing came easy. The whole family would go to Mexico often. We lived in the border town of San Luis, Arizona. I would read all the signs on the stores, the billboards, the traffic signs, and magazines titles, if we were standing in line. I made my Mom

laugh a lot too. One night, as the family ate tacos in the car, I saw a big billboard and began to read it. It said, “El Gran Chaparral,” but I read it wrong and said, “El Gran Champurrado.” My Mom laughed and said, “No, Gloria, léelo otra vez.” She began to pronounce the “cha,” but stopped and signaled me to continue. “Chaparral!” I screamed. She said, “Muy bien, mija!” When she had to enter the workforce because of so many mouths to feed, she hired a “Niñera,” from across the border. She would ask her to bring me books from the library in Mexico for me to read. I loved reading those books and would every day.

Yet, reading and writing was not the only way I learned Spanish. Mexican music was always playing in my house, from Pedro Infante and Vicente Fernández to Leo Dan and Los Apsons. My Mom also sang to us all the time. She sang songs from the famous Mexican children’s songwriter, Gabilondo Soler, “El Cri-Cri” and other songs I thought were nursery songs, but turned out to be Spanish Rock ‘n’ Roll songs from the sixties. With music, there was dancing and Mom made sure my brother and I learned to dance “La Bamba,” “El Jarabe Tapatío,” and “Jesusita en Chihuahua.” Birthday parties were a lot of fun. My brother and I would perform for all the family the dances our Mom had taught us. This is how I remember learning Spanish—the smells of my Mom’s Mexican cooking, the Mexican music, the trips to Mexico, and dancing Mexican folkloric music.

I realized quickly that reading, speaking, and writing two languages had its perks. My Mom always took me with her everywhere to interpret. Then, my Mom started lending me to the

neighbors, friends, and family to interpret for them when they needed. I was six or seven years old and would go to the Bell Company Office in Yuma, Arizona and tell the telephone clerks what was not working with a neighbor’s phone or doctor’s offices and even police departments. My Mom would only tell them, “Denle de comer,” but all I ever wanted was ice cream! That was my payment, vanilla ice cream! As I grew older, I began to help my siblings with their homework and my Mom saw I had all the traits of a teacher. In December 1980, I received as a gift my first black chalkboard. I remember, because it was the month John Lennon was murdered. A few of the neighborhood kids were talking about him as I tried to teach them how to write words in Spanish. I was ten years old. I finally asked, “¿Quien es John Lennon?” My Mom brought the radio out and “Imagine” was playing. It seemed like anytime I heard something that related to English, it was sad—the stress I saw on the faces of the adults I interpreted for, the death of John Lennon, and scary Mrs. Orines.

I have to admit that being able to speak, write, and read Spanish and English has been a privilege. It has opened doors for me when I least expected it. My first job offer happened when I was interpreting. The week after I graduated from high school, I went with my Mom to interpret for her, at my infant sister’s nine-month medical checkup. I interpreted verbatim everything from my Mom’s and Doctor Darwin’s conversation. I did notice Doctor Darwin being very attentive as I interpreted. After the examination ended, and before we walked out the door, Doctor Darwin asked me if I had

a summer job. I said, “No.” I told him that I was leaving to California on Saturday with my family to follow the crops to Salinas, California. He said, “Would you like to work here when you get back?” My eyes got wide. My Mom kept asking, “¿Qué te dice? ¿Qué te dice?” I was speechless. I finally said to the doctor, “Yes.” I gestured to my Mom to wait. Doctor Darwin said, “Today is Wednesday, can you come for an interview on Friday at 4:00?” I said, “Yes.” I told my Mom and she was so excited for me. I went to the interview and got the job as an interpreter/filing clerk. When I got back from California, I was going to college full-time and working at a doctor’s office part-time. I felt awesome!

I confess that learning English was not fun or happy in the beginning. However, I feel blessed to live in this country and having learned it. This country has provided my family with great opportunities that maybe in Mexico would not have been possible. I have read about its history, learned its anthem, and discovered a huge variety of music due to the diverse culture and ethnicities of the United States. I have friends from all over the world that share a common language with me: English. I have learned to let go of the bad memories. I have done all of my learning and education in English and for that alone, I will be forever grateful to this language and country. A language so different from my mother tongue, with its silent K’s and harsh H’s, vowels sounding different even after following the rules, and the pronunciations of words that are written one way and spoken another or written differently and pronounced the same as others. It has frustrated me at times, especially in college.



The day I got my first A on a college English paper, I returned the paper to the professor. I said, "I don't think you graded my paper correctly." The professor looked at me, took the paper, and reviewed it. She said, "Gloria, it is graded, you got an A." My eyes got teary. I still have that paper; it is with my most precious items.

Spanish is a gift to me. A gift that brings me joy; it has happy memories, feels like love and makes me feel proud to have it. English is a blessing. A blessing that I did not ask for but received anyway. It came in the darkest times and with the scariest memories. Both languages, even if I learned them differently, have made me develop capabilities that allow me to think and speak from one language to another within seconds. That is just phenomenal! I have become a teacher in early childhood education. I have taught children who are monolingual in Spanish and Korean. I did not want them to feel sad or scared when they hear English for the first time. I use all my abilities and creativity to make sure they feel understood, respected, and loved. I want their first memories of English to be beautiful and joyful ones. And once a month, I find myself cooking flour tortillas in a kitchen connected to my classroom. I use an electric skillet. Music plays in the background, while the children play ABC bingo on a kidney-bean-shaped table. ♦

# when will here be home

beck louis

when will here be home and when will home hold us  
a surface haunt and a deep ache  
proximity and wilderness  
we are on the bottom of a long-gone sea and we can read the waters on the stone  
left dry

a body bounded by silent years and writ  
and snarling hands pulling weeds  
picking hairs  
numbering the cinders i float over and  
haunt a surface, an unquiet land

my tongue still burns with  
black coffee and tobacco  
dried in the pits  
in the cracks of your lips

it was yesterday it was a monsoon  
for 10 years i pretended your teeth were fine and not rotting  
and that you couldn't help yourself and neither could i

we buried her in a creosote veil  
and we became a thing you couldn't ruin,

making a place out of the words and names i won't say or be



a color feeling  
spreading warm, primal, still  
tasting stars tasting god  
planetary noise and heart beats  
thumping at the back of my head  
grasping at the din of heaven in this hell body

eyes

it's made of words and eyes  
gold in the belly and blood pooling in the feet  
once there was someone, now there's just a  
collection  
bounded by food and air and sunlight  
grasping at the moon browning like some forgotten  
apple

we could know through sounds once, now we barely  
remember to eat

# Otredad The Other

Julio Ajin Mutz

La producción plástica de Julio Ajin Mutz, abarca distintos campos de pintura y escultura en variadas técnicas y en esta oportunidad, en el campo de la Terracota respectivamente. El esfuerzo enfocado a esta disciplina busca conocer a profundidad las propiedades del barro o arcilla, para encontrar algunas de las infinitas posibilidades estéticas que posee esta técnica milenaria, en una experimentación de materiales en cuanto a su manipulación y aplicación. La obra se deriva de la influencia de distintos artistas guatemaltecos y extranjeros.

El autor abarca temáticas diversas en sus trabajos, sin embargo, el contenido de la presente se enfoca en la Protesta, una expresión innata de todo artista contra la violencia en todas formas. El fundamento de la misma, parte del concepto antropológico **Otredad**, que denota la apreciación del otro como distinto, lo clasifica, subordina, cataloga y designa un calificativo. Otredad es la representación gráfica del concepto en sí, una liberación de sentimientos y energías impregnada en el espíritu del artista, al haber sido espectador de los frutos de la violencia suscitados durante el conflicto armado en Guatemala. Retomar esta temática no encierra una intención necrofilia o necrófaga, más bien es una retroalimentación hacia las generaciones post-conflictiva, heredera de males derivados de la desigualdad, el racismo, el odio, la división y la intolerancia. Otredad es una obra que continúa su desarrollo, diversas piezas siguen consolidándose en el taller evolucionando lentamente en sus formas y la técnica en sí.



Julio Ajin Mutz's visual art focuses on painting and sculpture. The sculptures shown here use terracotta materials, and the intent is to experiment with clay to seek some of the infinite aesthetic possibilities available within the medium. Both Guatemalan and various foreign artists have influenced these pieces. Mutz covers diverse themes in his work—the content here places focus on protest, an expression of art against violence. And this work deals with the anthropological concept of “the other.” “The other” is a person that is seen as not belonging, not accepted, as being different in some fundamental way from the majority of the group. The work presented here, **The Other** or **Otredad**, is a graphic representation of the concept itself, a liberation of feeling and energy. Mutz witnessed armed conflict throughout the Guatemalan Civil War, and his art is informed by this experience. **Otredad** is a living document. Mutz continues to workshop the form and technique.



**Exaltación**

Terracota y Pintura Acrílica  
48 x 24 x 50 centímetros  
2016

**Exaltation**

Terracotta and Acrylic Paint  
48 x 24 x 50 centimeters  
2016



**Estigma Social**

Terracota y Pintura Acrílica  
55 x 35 x 28 centímetros  
2016

**Social Stigma**

Terracotta and Acrylic Paint  
55 x 35 x 28 centimeters  
2016





**Argumentos**

Terracota y Pintura Acrílica  
70 x 35 x 28 centímetros  
2014

**Arguments**

Terracotta and Acrylic Paint  
70 x 35 x 28 centimeters  
2014



**Incertidumbre**

Terracota y Pintura Acrílica  
52 x 32 x 30 centímetros  
2013

**Uncertainty**

Terracotta and Acrylic Paint  
52 x 32 x 30 centimeters  
2013



**Sin título**

Terracota y Pintura Acrílica  
46 x 30 x 32 centímetros  
2014

**Untitled**

Terracotta and Acrylic Paint  
46 x 30 x 32 centimeters  
2014



**"Many will call me an  
adventurer, and that I am—  
only one of a  
different sort: one  
who risks his skin  
to prove his  
truths." -Ernesto Guevara**

