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Inside Historic Santa Fe

Spring is here, well, we hope. Weather in New Mexico at this time of year brings rains, snows, winds and the fluctuations in temperature, but also the promise of growth with pale apricot blooms, cheery daffodil flowers, and sprouting cool weather vegetables. The prevalent American robins are flitting around town signaling the advent of warmer months and the autumn effects of the cursed Daylight Savings Time brings happiness when this human construct approaches the time of the vernal equinox. The radiators will soon be powered down for the season and the clunky wooden doors of El Zaguán will welcome seasonal breezes. We are starting to work on our spring, summer and fall events for members and the public including exhibitions, talks, tours, and other gatherings.

In this issue, we offer an essay by El Zaguán resident Sarah Stark titled Reading Hard Fiction and Preaching to the Choir with her reading list of suggested fictional novels. We also reproduce an article on El Zaguán from the 1977 HSFF Bulletin and finish this eZine with a piece by our gardener Linda Churchill on spring in New Mexico.

On our website, we plan to have more useful content including a maps archive and a feature on Agua Fria Village in the upcoming months. In the last eZine, we announced the launch of the Bulletin Archive. Find all the Bulletins at https://www.historicsantafe.org/bulletins/.

We hope you enjoy this issue! Happy St. Patrick’s Day to our community!

To receive the upcoming printed newsletter and to attend the Salon talks with no additional entry fee, please sign up for a membership or donate now. To continue to offer these programs and partnerships and maintain El Zaguán, we ask you to give. Your Support of The Historic Santa Fe Foundation contributes to the preservation and knowledge of our great city of Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico.

eZine cover: Mara Saxer, The original Cross of the Martyrs. Do you know where in Santa Fe this is? Dedicated during Fiesta 1920. More information on historicsantafe.org.

Image above: Courtesy of Melanie McWhorter, Shadow in doorway of chapel at Fort Stanton, NM.
I spent the last two weeks reading work I’ve either read before or have meant to read for a long time—essays by Ursula LeGuin and Jonathan Franzen, interviews by Nadine Gordimer, favorite passages by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and George Saunders and Virginia Woolf, trying to find my way with this topic I suggested a few months back: **Why it’s STILL important to read political, or social, novels as they are also called.**

Once I got over my misgivings—why I’d presumed to have anything important to say—once I allowed myself to simply READ and RE-READ, I confirmed a wobbly place deep in my stomach. What was this feeling? And wasn’t this what I wanted to talk about?

And so I kept on reading—as I’ve spent a lifetime doing. Jotting down notes in my black spiral notebook with my black pen. Something—crisp sentence upon stunning crisp sentence by these writers whose work has made a difference for me—pulled me forward, as if illuminating a dark tunnel step-by-studied-step.

What I thought might begin as a discussion of serious, social fiction—what it IS and what it ISN’T—transformed itself into a throbbing need to connect. To find my people—my tribe—the particular choir with which I wish to sing. Committed readers. Those of us who read because we have to, because it is the way we find our refuge, our community, our voice. For us, any work of fiction that is unpredictable and that examines the state of our culture, our world, our leaders and our followers—any work of fiction, in other words, written by a writer using her imagination to create a story that, if read carefully, helps us access something previously unknown—is important. Many works dubbed literary fiction fall into this category, but not all of them. Hyper-realistic works sold as “fiction” have never moved me much. And other works that have long-been excluded from the lists of snobs, works such as the graphic novel American Born Chinese, by Gene Luen Yang and Ursula LeGuin’s young adult science fiction masterwork, The Wizard of Earthsea are fully part of my rich and varied collection.

It is almost impossible for me to open the pages of work like this and begin to read, without feeling something change on the inside of me.

It’s there—this feeling inside of me—despite what Jonathan Franzen calls our “sugar water culture”—our obsession with screens, the golden-age-of-televison, the incessant noise about what is right and wrong in our world and who is to be blamed and who praised. From within the morass of millions of moms and dads and grandmothers and grandchildren neglecting their gardens and their treehouses and their clever conversations or their quiet walks in the woods for one more posting on Facebook or Instagram, for one more opportunity to tell a friend how busy they are, I experience a quiet enclave inside my head when I read. I find myself able to empathize. To plan. To be a mother and a daughter and a sister and a teacher. Not needing to answer all the questions. Not becoming bogged down by the idea that ‘not enough people are reading.’ I find myself wanting to read and write and, yes, to preach to the choir.

Knowing that fiction-reading in our culture today is not nearly the important social force it was when, say *Catch-22* was published in 1961 and that novel’s central idea became a household phrase. Knowing the dominance of fast, cheap entertainment, high-technology, screens and sound bites, I go on.
There’s been hardly any winter in New Mexico this year—a drought of snow and gray. We have lived with endless seeming blue skies and 50 degree-days through most of January and February. Still, I and almost everyone I know, has had a long dark time of it. In the past year and a half, in conjunction with the daily barrage of news about our repulsive and dangerous President, I’ve ended my second marriage, dealt with breast cancer, sent my youngest daughter off to college in NYC and done my best to navigate the challenges of aging parents who live far away, in Central Texas. All this while teaching English full-time and completing a second novel. A serious social novel.

No. Social isolates feel as if we are somehow different from the rest of the world. We are not asocial. In fact, we long for connection. We can be very social. But eventually, we retreat back to our books, back to our black pens and our black spiral notebooks, because being in the world, this brassy world dominated by screens and surface conversation, is particularly difficult for us. Suffocating, I sometimes feel.

According to Heath’s research, many social isolates become writers of serious literature. We are often the ones writing and reading the challenging novels that provide no easy answers. For us, the hard slow work of reading a difficult novel is a no-risk proposition. It promises an escape from the noise of our culture, a respite from superficiality, and the absurd obsession with quick-fixes.

Traveling along with Ursula LeGuin’s Ged, as he seeks out his shadows, his darkness, on the great uncharted ocean, I am less debilitated by the news of the day. I am more likely to be inspired to get back to work. To do those things—writing and teaching and parenting, hiking and gardening—that are most likely the best contributions I can make in this dark and difficult time. As I read, I put myself into the hands of a trusted guide, the writer. I don’t need her words to increase my knowledge base. I’m not trying to answer any particular question about Syria or Afghanistan or North Korean nuclear weapons or U.S. defense spending.

Rather, I am on a quest. A quest to feel something. A quest to access that wobbly place deep in my
stomach. In my experience this is one of the surest ways for me to feel empathy for other human beings. It is also one of the best ways I know for finding new strength to persevere.

So what are the novels—the characters?—that have made a difference for me in my lifetime? Those who have helped me along the way to be more honest, to question, to be courageous in small ways. I think of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, her direct honesty about her homeland of Iran and the 1979 revolution she lived through as a child, the daughter of intellectuals. I think of the courage I learned from this child narrator I met for the first time in middle age. I think of—and reread at least once a year—the opening pages of Jonathan Franzen’s *The Corrections*, that evokes the haunting loneliness of a Midwestern husband and wife once their children are long-gone and dismissive, the old age and senility having begun to set in.

Without doing any online searches, without anything more than a quick glance at the bookshelves that line my living room and a few moments of closing my eyes and remembering, here are some of the works of fiction in no particular order, the carefully shaped scenes and characters, hundreds of thousands of precise word choices—that have made a difference to me:

- *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf (1929)
- *No Great Mischief*, Alistair MacLeod (1989)
- *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1866)
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez (1967)
- *July’s People*, Nadine Gordimer (1981)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston (1937)

I’ve got a terrible memory generally, but I’ll never forget this last one, this short story published in the *New Yorker* in 2010 and written by the Ethiopian-American writer, Dinaw Mengestu. From its first line the story pulls me in, changing the cadence of my blood. It reads:

> Thirty-five years after my father left Ethiopia, he died in a room in a boarding house in Peoria, Illinois, that came with a partial view of the river. We had never spoken much during his lifetime, but, on a warm October morning in New York, shortly after he died, I found myself having a conversation with him as I walked north on Amsterdam, Avenue, toward the high school where for the past three years I had been teaching a course in Early American literature to privileged freshman.

Suddenly, I am being urged to know more about this narrator, this young man speaking directly to me.
who, in one crisp string of sentences has told me that he is an immigrant, estranged from his now-dead father, and—to boot—an English teacher at a private school. How can my own skin not soften as I read on, eventually learning the tale, fictional or no, of his father’s harrowing journey curled inside a shipping crate on a boat headed to America. This is a story I’ve known is possible from years of reading the *New York Times*—reports and photographs of immigrants from Syria and Iraq and all corners of the Middle East jumping on rafts or whatever form of transport materializes in their desperate quest to leave. But all those newspaper reports run together—I don’t remember a single separate detail and am left with the murky hopeless tragedy of it all. And yet, here is a story—a fictional imagined story—of a son trying to imagine his own estranged father’s desperate escape. Trying to make sense of the fact that they two of them, father and son, were never close. It’s etched into my mind. It’s helped me, over the years since I first read it, to look straight into the world and to see it. To try, for a moment, to come close to standing in the shoes of someone else—in this case an educated Muslim immigrant from Ethiopia who, I am quick to admit, I can never fully understand.

In the writing of my first novel, I spent a lot of time visiting with Gabriel García Márquez in my mind. Imaginary conversations about what he would say about this or that and how my protagonist, Jefferson Long Soldier, would reply in return. That was about seven years ago and leading up to his death in April 2014. Recently however I’ve been curious about García Márquez and what he’d be writing if he were still alive today. What our conversation would be like right now if only he’d visit me in my living room here in Apt 7 at El Zaguán in the wee hours of the night. ... And suddenly, I find myself less despairing. More confident in the idea that: It’s not my job to figure out all the answers to all the world’s problems. But it is my job to *stay awake* (as Ursula LeGuin might say) and to do what I do best. That’s the most each of us can do—and if we all focus on that, the cumulative effect will be profound.

For my part, I’m modeling the behavior of reading serious fiction—in public, at coffeeshops, in the middle of the day in the middle of the week whenever I’m able. I’m reminding my 7th and 10th grade English students how much I love to read—how important it is to my life as a human being. I’m asking my four kids what it is they are reading, and I’m telling them about my latest projects. I will continue to give them books for birthday and Christmas presents for as long as I am able.

And I’m writing. Writing for the choir that I know is alive and well in this country. As I write over the next few years I will undoubtedly think from time-to-time about Jonathan Franzen. Last I heard he lived in Santa Cruz, California, the beach town where my oldest daughter spent her first two years of college. I’ll wonder about what new work he’s up to. How he’s turning all this violence and chaos and absurdity into a story that will make me both laugh out loud and cry. A story that will, in the end, make me feel less alone. Maybe I’ll write him a letter. He’s been known to write back.

And what will I be writing in response to all this violence and chaos and absurdity? I’m beginning to think of a woman who rebels against it all. An entirely made-up woman—a mother and a teacher perhaps. A woman so motivated by the state of her nation, and the state of her world, that she begins to do absurdly beautiful and generous things. So focused on making a difference is she that she begins to look crazy from the outside. Yes. I can begin to see her in my mind. I think I’ll call her Delilah. Delilah Dent.

**Sarah Stark** is a mother, teacher and writer curious about the ways human beings learn and re-learn how to love and care for one another throughout dark times. She has a background in political science and foreign affairs, and worked in the early years of her career as a defense analyst in Washington, DC on issues concerning nuclear nonproliferation and peacekeeping. She currently teaches English at Santa Fe Preparatory School, and taught creative writing previously at the Institute of American Indian Arts for many years. Her novel, *Out There* (*Leaf Storm Press*, 2014) was selected as a Top Book by Publishers Weekly for 2014 and received a starred review. *Out There* was also selected as the winner of the INDIEFAB Editor’s Choice Award for Fiction Book of the Year, 2014. Sarah lives with her son, Jack, as a writer-in-residence at Historic Santa Fe Foundation’s El Zaguán.
The following article was researched and composed in 1977 and since that time, research on El Zaguán has shown that some of the information in the article has been contested. For example, the suggestion that Bandelier had a hand in the design of the El Zaguán garden is thought to be incorrect. Please enjoy this piece as it is a lovely dedication to the HSFF home and offices and the history of the iconic building on the historic Canyon Road.
El Zaguán as viewed from Canyon Road.

Cultural Properties Review Committee — State Planning Office Filex, State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

EL ZAGUAN

The visitor or architect in quest of old Santa Fe inevitably finds his way to Canyon Road. Although the street as a whole has a charming character, thanks to an engaging sequence of architectural forms and an unpredictable building line, specific houses of architectural merit and genuine antiquity are rare. One may wander for blocks without being able to single out a particular house of distinction. At 545 Canyon Road, however, the visitor inevitably stops in admiration before the long rambling Territorial house. This old mansion, called "El Zaguán," has long been regarded as one of the show places of New Mexico.

Originally it was the home of James Johnson, one of the first Yankee merchants to settle permanently in Santa Fe. Mr. Johnson purchased the property in 1849 but this should not suggest that the house as it appears today dates from that time. Variations in wall thickness (two to four feet), changes in ceiling height and construction and differences in trim indicate that the place was built over a period of time.

Several rooms were on the land which Mr. Johnson bought. Although conjecture, one might suspect that these were the file of
rooms, #7-8-9 and possibly #10-11. The larger scale and the somewhat greater degree of formality in plan would suggest rooms #1 and #2-3-4 to be later additions, probably the late 1860's when so much building activity was afoot in the Territory. The pedimented window and door frames, the glass in the double-hung windows and the trim of the west portal suggest such a date. Rooms #12 and 13, despite later remodeling, may also have been added in the nineteenth century. Rooms #5 and 12 probably were added later. However, the danger of trying to reconstruct the life of an adobe building is perilous.

A good many of the interior doors connecting rooms in sequence have been blocked up, but their presence is still announced by closets or deep shelves. Probably in the 1920’s new windows were installed in most east portions of the structure and the porches of both patios were rebuilt. The oldest surviving trim, the only of unusual architectural interest, is to be found in the rooms at the west end. The adobe fireplaces, although following old designs, were also probably rebuilt.

The plan of El Zaguan is informal. Essentially the house wraps

The Builder of El Zaguan,
James L. Johnson
Miscellaneous Collections, State Records and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.


The mansion itself around two patios. The central patio serves as the entry from the street and about it are grouped the larger, more formal rooms. The east patio, which opens into a kind of terrace, was the center of household activities. The west portal and its formal garden are at the end of the long corridor, or zaguan, which runs the entire length of the house and gives it its name. Appropriately, the library, #1, and the main sala, #2, were situated in this area.

The handsomest architectural feature of the house is the long portal that runs along the west facade and looks over the garden. The irregular spacing of the columns and unsymmetrical fenestration are in keeping with the usual informality of Territorial architecture. Particularly charming are the simple decorative accents which have been achieved with a few home-cut wooden moldings applied to posts or door trim as a faint recall of the columns, architraves or pediments of the Classical style. The lattice along the end of the portal nearest the street is a simple decorative feature that provides privacy and clarifies the relation between public and private areas.

The mansion's other interesting feature is the main corridor that, beginning with the east patio, moves through the center of the house,
fusing with the entrance patio and prolonging onto the west portal (see illustration). This space has a charming ambiguity, and the viewer is never certain whether he is inside or out.

Despite these architectural features, the real merit of “El Zaguan” lies in the placement of the house on its site— or better still, the manner in which the house seems to have grown out of its location. Situated on a long, narrow terrace, the structure is closely bound by the road on one side and a high terrace on the other. From this terrace one drops down to the level of the once open fields.

The late owner, Mrs. Margretta S. Dietrich, about 1948 compiled a brief history of the house from assorted legends and documents. According to this, the house which today consists of fourteen rooms at one time contained twenty-four. This included a chapel (#5), a special “chocolate room” and Mr. Johnson’s library (#1), which once housed the largest collection of books in the Territory. The services of a resident carpenter are said to have been required to make doors, windows and furniture for the mansion. Servant quarters for the establishment were located across from the house on the south side of Canyon Road. The west garden, according to this account, was laid out with the advice of Adolf Bandelier; peony bushes were imported from China and the horse chestnut trees brought from the midwest.

The subsequent history of the place has been checkered, often melodramatic. The Johnson heirs forfeited the house about the time of the First War. For a while “El Zaguan” served as a desirable pensione. In the twenties it was restored under the direction of Kate (Mrs. Kenneth) Chapman who advised on the restoration of many old Santa Fe homes. Mrs. Dietrich bought “El Zaguan” in the late twenties and although she divided it into seven apartments, she respected the nineteenth century character of the old place. Her recent death again raises the question of the building’s future. It is a landmark that must be preserved.

—Bainbridge Bunting
Ahh, Spring. English poets have long waxed eloquently about the soft breezes, the delicate rising of grass blades, the unfurling of fern fronds, the fragrant flowers that invite us out of our cold winter homes and into the wakening world. You know, “in Spring, a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.” … (1).

Screech, halt! That is not the spring of Northern New Mexico! Yes the light may be gaining over the dark, but in spring, we’re more likely to scramble back to our cozy homes to escape the harsh March winds and the painful juniper pollen, than to pause by the wayside where “the fields breathe sweet, [and the] daisies kiss our feet” (2). For one, our daisies bloom in autumn here. For another, we’ve probably enjoyed more calm, balmy days in January and February, than we see in all of March (and well into April).

The word that best describes spring to me, after gardening in Santa Fe for almost three decades, is “Surprise!” We laugh wryly and roll our eyes about the changeable nature of weather year-round in New Mexico, but in spring it really does make wild swings on a regular basis, moving from bitter wind to soft breezes, then back to winter chill within the space of a day or less. We don’t generally see many soft April showers that bring May flowers here in the spring, and it never rains violets (3), but rather late-season snowfalls that damage the “darling buds of May,” (4) and months of wind that seems to suck the moisture out of everything alive.

Harsh? undependable? brutal, even? Yes, we would all agree. But then, but then...you uncover a clump of gorgeous orange-throated violet crocuses under the gray-brown sticks and leaves you’re raking away in your spring cleanup chores. Or a bunch of bright blue early irises suddenly grace the pinon duff, stopping you in your tracks for just a moment. Maybe someone else planted them years ago and this is the first year you’ve seen them in their delicate, ephemeral but oh-so-hardy glory. Or maybe you stuck that last handful of bulbs in the ground just last October and forgot about them until today. Surprise! a gift from the past, finding your eye and heart in early March.

And while you complain to yourself (and your spouse) how much your hands hurt after hours of pruning fruit trees on yet another miserably chilly day, you see that the buds on the apricot stems you brought in a few days ago have swelled; and in another day, the pale pink blossoms open to grace your kitchen table and flutter around the room in a fragrant, messy riot, reminding you that yes, life is returning and the light is getting brighter and longer.

There’s no doubt that spring is indeed a season of hard work. We brave the wind and the chill (don’t worry, it will be warmer tomorrow) to cut back last year’s grasses and overgrown shrub masses, broken sunflower stems and winter-damaged rose canes, moving piles of debris from the garden to the compost. So perhaps in a sense we are engineering our spring

Linda Churchill is the lead gardener at El Zaguán and at the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, and is the owner of Green Forward Landscaping in Santa Fe.
surprises: we want to see fresh green, not twiggy brown stuff, come March, so we clear out the gray and the brown so as to sooner capture the green.

But we cannot forget that spring is, with or without our aching hands and troubled backs. Perhaps the best surprise of spring—besides the sheer fact that it does return every year—is the amazing happy bloom of the first Perky Sue of the season, cheering on the spring sun with promises of bright warmth, gracing an otherwise drab roadside with promise. Her silver-green foliage is there on the hill and roadside year-round, gathering the year’s sun to give it back to us as a smile, a moment of hope, and a wee bright surprise on a cold March morning. It’s enough to send us back to the garden to finish our spring cleanup, in the hope of catching one more surprise moment.

1. Alfred, Lord Tennyson
2. Thomas Nashe
3. B. G. De Sylva
4. Wm. Shakespeare

HSFF MISSION

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the historic properties and diverse cultural heritage of the Santa Fe area, and to educate the public about Santa Fe's history and the importance of preservation.

Contact: The Historic Santa Fe Foundation 545 Canyon Road, Suite 2, Santa Fe, NM 87501 505-983-2567 historicsantafe.org

Sunlight in the Jozef Bakos’ house, courtesy Melanie McWhorter from HSFF’s Instagram @historicsantafefoundation

One of the tentative locations for the HSFF House tour in cooperation New Mexico Museum of Art’s centennial celebration, School for Advanced Research and New Mexico Humanities Council. More information on the tour page.

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MARCH/SPRING
2018 CALENDAR

For a list of all HSFF events, visit our website, historicsantafe.org/events.

Exhibition continues through March 31, 2018: On/Off Hours 4: HSFF Staff Show, El Zaguán, 545 Canyon Road, Suite 2, Santa Fe.

Thursday, March 22, 2018, 1pm, Salon El Zaguán: A Film Screening and Panel for John Eddy’s Roads of the Seventies. RSVP required to Jacqueline@historicsantafe.org or 505-983-2567. No admission fee for members and $5 non-members.

Friday, April 6, 2018, 5-7pm, opening The Photo Encaustics of Jim Gautier. Exhibition opens at El Zaguán on April 6 and continues through April 27, 2018.

Thursday, April 19, 2018, 3pm, Salon El Zaguán: Beverley Spears on her book Early Churches of Mexico. RSVP required to Jacqueline@historicsantafe.org or 505-983-2567. No admission fee for members and $5 non-members.

Sunday, October 7, 2018, 1-5pm, Artists’ Home Tour. Tour includes four artist’s homes in partnership with School for Advanced Research, New Mexico Museum of Art and the New Mexico Humanities Council. More information on the Artists’ Home Tour page.

To share events please contact the HSFF Development Coordinator Melanie McWhorter at melanie@historicsantafe.org or call 505-983-2567.

To RSVP to a Salon El Zaguán talk, email Jacqueline Hill at Jacqueline@historicsantafe.org or call 505-983-2567. There is no admission for HSFF Members and guest or non-members are $5.00. For more information on HSFF Membership, visit the Join & Give page of our website.