How was our *America Latina* written and celebrated through the poems of those who dreamt and fought for an independent nation? What were the nation’s rhythms, colors and souls in those poetic works? And how is independence thought about 200 years later, when borders are experienced as signs of exclusion rather than emancipation and when immigration flows have made of transnational lives and identities across the continent and beyond a reality? What is there to dream, write and imagine? What is the poem that dreams and writes the independent nation today?

Join us for a celebration of 200 years of Latin American poetry!

With the participation of the poets:

Tomás Galán, Nicolás Linares, Felipe Martínez, Juana Ramos,
Alina Peña, Gema Santamaría, Amanda Siegel, Isabel Zapata

*The Janey Program in Latin American Studies at The New School for Social Research*
Felipe Martínez
Decree of War to the Death (Decreto de Guerra a Muerte)

"Venezuelans: an army of brothers, sent by the sovereign Congress of New Granada, has come to free you, and it is already amongst you, after evicting the oppressors from the provinces of Mérida and Trujillo.

We are the ones sent to destroy the Spaniards, to protect the Americans, and to reestablish the republican governments that formed the Confederation of Venezuela. The states covering our arms (weapons) are once again ruled by their old constitutions and magistrates, fully enjoying their liberty and independence; for our mission is only to break the chains of servitude, which still oppress some of our peoples, not claiming to create laws, or enforce acts of domination, which the right of war could authorize us to do.

Touched by your misfortunes, we could not indifferently watch the afflictions inflicted to you by the barbaric Spaniards, who have annihilated you with robbery and destroyed you with death, infringed the most solemn treaties and capitulations; in one word, committed every crime, reducing the Republic of Venezuela to the most horrific desolation. It is so that justice demands vindication, and necessity forces us to take it. May the monsters that infest Colombian soil, and have covered it with blood disappear for good; may their punishment be equal to the magnitude of their treason, so that the stain of our ignominy is washed off, and to show the nations of the universe that the sons of America cannot be offended without punishment.

In spite of our just resentments against the iniquitous Spaniards, our magnanimity still deigns itself to open, for the last time, a route to conciliation and friendship; we still invite them to live peacefully among us, if, hating their crimes and turning to good faith, they cooperate with us in the destruction of the intruding government of Spain, and the reestablishment of the Republic of Venezuela.

All Spaniards who do not conspire against tyranny in favor of our just cause, using the most effective and active resources, will be considered enemies, and will be punished as traitors to the homeland, and therefore, will be promptly executed. On the other hand, a general and absolute pardon is issued to all Spaniards who pass into our army, with or without their weapons; to those who offer aid to the good citizens working hard to shake off the shackles of tyranny. War officers and magistrates that proclaim the government of Venezuela and join our cause will keep their destinies and work positions; in one word, all Spaniards who perform service for the State will be reputed and treated as Americans.

And you, Americans, who have been separated from the road of justice by error and perfidy, know that your brothers forgive you and seriously regret your misdeeds, intimately persuaded that you cannot be guilty, and that only the ignorance and blindness imposed on you by the authors of your crimes could cause you to perpetrate them. Do not fear the sword that comes to avenge you and cut the ignominious bindings which tie you to your executioners' fate. Rely on absolute immunity for your honor, life and properties; the mere title of Americans will be you warranty and safeguard. Our weapons have come to protect you, and will never be used against a single one of our brothers.

This amnesty extends to the very traitors who have most recently committed their acts of felony; and will be so religiously carried out that no reason, cause or pretext will be enough to make us break our offer, no matter how extraordinary the reasons you give us to excite our adversity.

Spaniards and Canarians, count on death, even if indifferent, if you do not actively work in favor of the independence of America. Americans, count on life, even if guilty."

Simón Bolívar

**Amanda Siegel**

"Lateinamericanish" by Moishe Pinchevsky (Originally written in Yiddish, translated into English by Amanda)

**Isabel Zapata**

“Alta traición” (“High Treason”) by Jose Emilio Pacheco

“Nani” by Alberto Rios (English and Spanish)

**Juana Ramos**

“La colonia” and “Un reino mágico en Centroamérica” (Written and read by the author)

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### Small hours of the night

When you know I’m dead don’t say my name because then death and peace would have to wait.

Your voice, the bell of your five senses, would form the thin bean of light my mist would be looking for.

When you know I’m dead, say other words. Say flower, bee, teardrop, bread, storm.

Don’t let your lips find my eleven letters. I’m sleepy, I’ve loved, I’ve earned silence.

Don’t say my name when you know I’m dead: I would come out of the dark ground for your voice.

Don’t say my name, don’t say my name. When you know I’m dead don’t say my name.

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**Bad News on a Scrap of Newspaper**

Nowadays when my friends die only their names die.

How can I hope, down in this rotten hole, to take in more than the newsprint, the sheen of delicate black letters, arrows deep into personal memories?

Only those who live outside the prisons can honor the corpses, wash off the grief for their dead ones with embraces, stretch up the grave with fingernail and tears.

Not those of us in jail: we just whistle to let the sound play down the news.

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Roque Dalton
Tomás Modesto Galán
Poems from René del Risco, Miguel Alfonseca, Jacque View and from the author (* in Spanish)

Alina Peña

In Hard Times

They asked that man if they could take his time and join it to history. They asked for his hands, because in difficult times there is nothing better than a good pair of hands. They asked for his eyes that once had tears so he could ponder the bright side (especially the bright side of life) because for horror one terrified eye is enough. They asked for his lips, dry and cracked, to affirm, to erect, with each affirmation, a dream (the high dream); they asked for his legs, hard and gnarled, (his old high-stepping legs) because in difficult times is there anything better than a pair of legs for building or trench-digging? They asked him for the forest that nourished him as a child with its obedient tree. They asked for his chest, his heart, his shoulders. They told him that it was strictly necessary. Later they explained that all this giving would be pointless unless he gave up his tongue, because in difficult times there is nothing so useful for stopping hatred or lies. And finally they begged him please, to begin to walk because in difficult times is there anything better than a pair of legs for building or trench-digging? They asked him for the forest that nourished him as a child with its obedient tree. They asked for his chest, his heart, his shoulders. They told him that it was strictly necessary. Later they explained that all this giving would be pointless unless he gave up his tongue, because in difficult times there is nothing so useful for stopping hatred or lies. And finally they begged him please, to begin to walk because in difficult times is without a doubt the decisive test.
I have lived always in Cuba

I live in Cuba. I have always lived in Cuba. Those years of wandering in the world of which so much has been said are my lies, my forgeries. Because I have always been in Cuba.

And it is true there were days during the Revolution when the Island could have blown up among the waves; but in the airports, in the places I was

I felt that they were calling me by name and that as I answered I was already on this shore sweating, walking, in shirtsleeves, drunk on wind and foliage, with the sun and the sea climbing the terraces and singing their hallelujahs.

Heriberto Padilla

Gema Santamaría

“To live in the borderlands means you” (by Gloria Anzaldua)
“Written on a Roadside stone during the first eruption” and “The campesinos go down the road” (by Pablo Antonio Cuadra)
“What are you, Nicaragua?” (by Gioconda Belli, translated by Gema)
Letter wrote at the age of 30 (written and read by author)

Natalia Aristizábal

“Was I not American?”

Written and read by the author.
Patriot Theatre
(written and read by author)
This nation is still inexistent
Puppetry illegitimate acts that
Manages flags and crucifixes,
with unique expertise.

I
what about the spectators?
Here we are!
Calm or stressed
some of us
have long hair
others, short
embellishing their heads
with pretty helmets
and green hats ...
.... It is all part of the spectacle, endless
work
that has wandered this land for 200 years,
after the change of script.

II
It remains the same,
a disposable homeland
nothing is forever in this stage.

Lately, the public has been told
"The theater belongs to you"
and the they do not say anything
the actors are nervous.

Behind curtains, someone laughs out
loud
nobody understands what is being said
A punk cuts the silence
he blames the owner for the laughter.

III
The puppets greet each other.
They talk about freedom, they rejoice with
their strings
they argue about their clumsy movements,
braquing of their autonomy whilst walking.

One is blessing itself, the other exhibits with
despise the punk’s head.
It shouts with pride “oppression has been
abolished.”
The public gets tired,
the puppet calls for calm.
The Curtain falls.

The impatient crowd rises
someone whispers of a better theater on the
corner.
The audience wants to get there.
Few can do it.

Behind the curtains a laugh is heard,
obody understands it.