

Cultural Compass

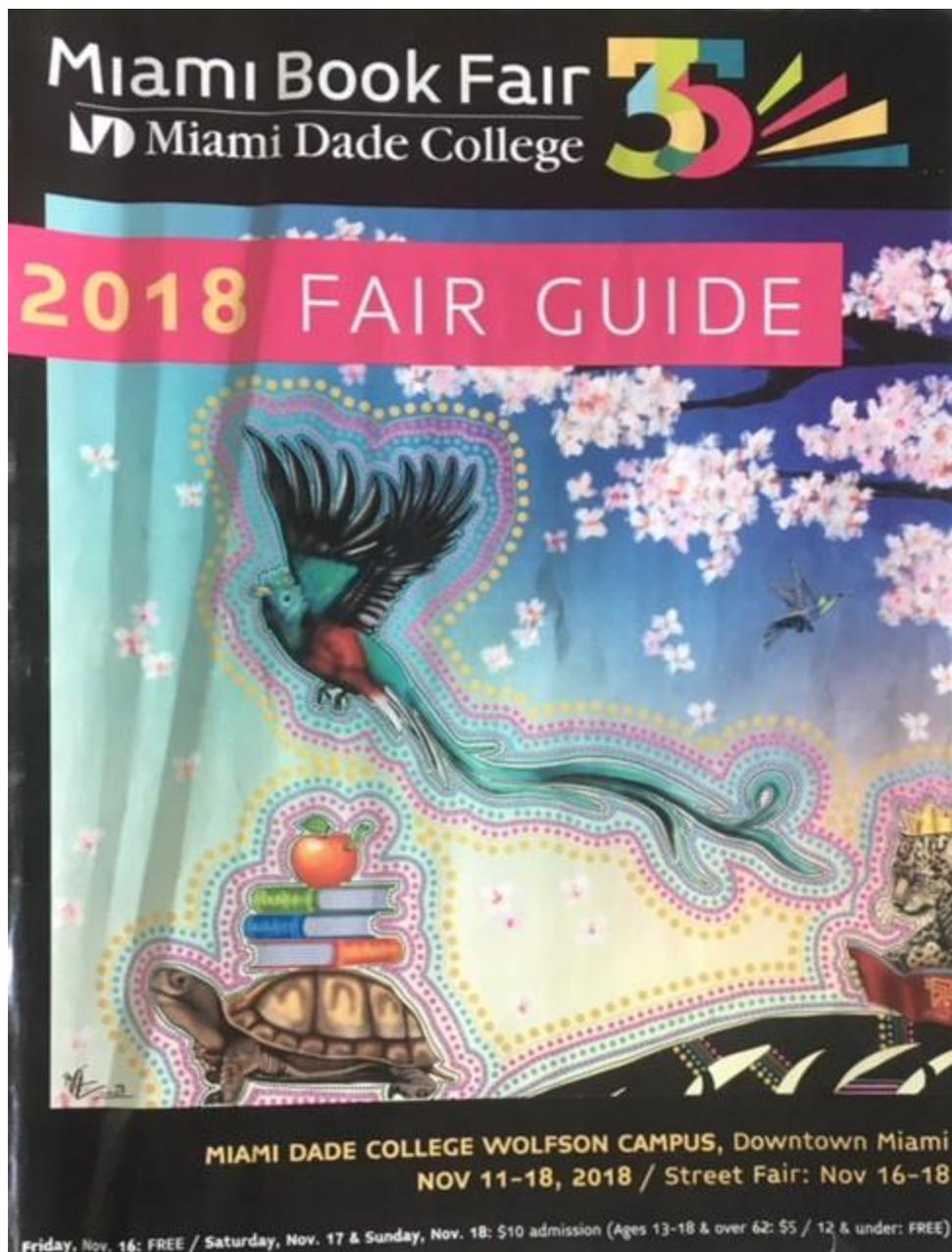
# Eccentric Dictionary

## The Miami Book Fair

November, by the magic of books, turns downtown Miami into a paradise. Jorge Luis Borges defined paradise as an infinite library. The Miami Book Fair brings along its colorful tents some five hundred authors and thousands of books.

When the Fair was first launched in 1984, the seed was planted for a daring dream, “to establish Miami as a global hub for literature,” the official Miami Book Fair Guide points out. And it has flourished into a respected international affair that attracts literary figures of the caliber of Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa.

“Founded at Miami Dade College thirty-five years ago, the Miami Book Fair has convened millions of book lovers from all over the world and positioned our community as a champion for culture and literacy. MDC produces the nation’s most acclaimed and comprehensive literary gathering. It truly is a festival of books, authors and the arts like no other,” observed Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, President, Miami Dade College.



A well used Guide, featuring the work of artist Luis Valle. Photo, Downtown News.

While leafing through the 2018 Fair Guide, suddenly I was hit by Milan Kundera's assertion about novels. For him, a novel is a long definition of one or two words. His infectious logic led me to imagine the Book Fair as a grand dictionary. Next, I set out to

compose one based on the writings of some participants in this 35th edition of the Miami Book Fair.

The methodology was simple: Match a thought to a word.

## In Alphabetical Order

**Books:** Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination and the journey. They are home. — **Anna Quindlen.**

**Deadlines:** Deadlines are a great antidote to insecurity. — **Tina Brown**

**Grudges:** They say it's good to let your grudges go, but I don't know, I'm quite fond of my grudge. I tend it like a little pet. — **Liane Moriarty**

**History:** No, "the good old days weren't always good." That's not an insult to America, that's an affirmation of America: an America that makes itself stronger when, despite long odds and searing setbacks, everyday citizens stand up and decide that the way things are isn't the way things have to be. — **John Kerry.**

**Leadership:** Good leadership requires you to surround yourself with people of diverse perspectives who can disagree with you without fear of retaliation. — **Doris Kearns Goodwin**

**Memory:** The thing is, all memory is fiction. — **Robert Goolrick.**

**Influencers.** Lobbying is the world's second—oldest profession. **Bill Press.**

**Mirror:** Your own actions are a better mirror of your life than the actions of all your enemies put together. — **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o.**

**Poetry:** Before you go further, let me tell you what a poem brings, first, you must know the secret, there is no poem to speak of, it is a way to attain a life without boundaries. — **Juan Felipe Herrera.**

**Truth:** Why are we so obsessed with the truth — begging for it, asking for it, demanding it, when all we really want to do is confirm our own vision of reality?” — **Jorge Volpi**

**Vission:** You can’t be pro-business if you are not pro-education. — **Julian Castro.**

**Young:** “Strange to be almost fifty, no? I feel like I just understood how to be young.”

“Yes! It’s like the last day in a foreign country. You finally figure out where to get coffee, and drinks, and a good steak. And then you have to leave. And you won’t ever be back.” — **Andrew Sean Greer.**

## **Indecipherable**

With so much wisdom at hand — secluded in my finite library — I had to include definitions for concepts so elusive to reason that poetry alone attempts to pin down.

**Elemental:** In love there are two things — bodies and words. — **Joice Carol Oates.**

**Eternity:** I believe love is eternal. Even if eternity is only five minutes. — **Sandra Cisneros.**

**Love:** I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where. /  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride; /  
so I love you because I know no other way than this: /  
Where *I* does not exist, nor you. — **Pablo Neruda.**

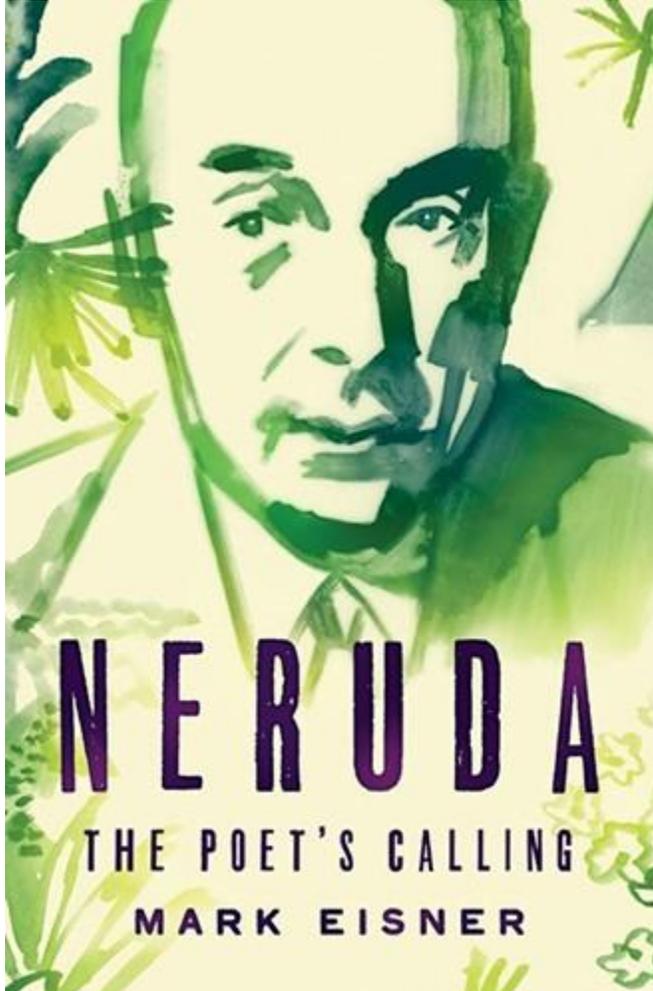


Image courtesy of Ecco/Harpers Collins.

Neruda, of course, is dead. And no, his ghost has not been invited to this latest Edition of the Miami Book Fair, but Mark Eisner will discuss his definitive biography *Neruda: The Poet's Calling*.

Gwen Kirkpatrick, Chair, Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Georgetown University, commented on the book: “Mark Eisner skillfully captures Neruda’s life and many passions: for poetry,

people, love, and public recognition, using a wealth of archival, textual, and oral sources, some previously unknown to us. This extraordinary account of Neruda’s life is not just for readers of poetry—it will tempt even those who don’t normally read poetry to dive into the magic of Neruda.”

And to end on a poetic note, here is what Pablo Neruda had to say in *Ode to Time*: “Inside your body, your age is growing, / inside my body, my age places foot after wondering foot... / It is beautiful, how, as we live, we grow old in the living... / My eyes were consumed by your loveliness, / but you have become my eyes...”

The Miami Book Fair at Miami Dade College, the Downtown Wolfson Campus, November 11–18 / Street Fair: Nov. 16–18. For more information and tickets: [MiamiBookFair.com](http://MiamiBookFair.com)

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