

diverse
Youth
2011

ANTHOLOGY Austin International Poetry Festival

edited by Deborah A. Akers



Austin Poets International
Presents:

DIVERSE YOUTH

2011

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Deborah A. Akers

Judges
Ken Fontenot

Mary Dallas

Jo Virgil

Guest Judge
karla k. morton

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About the Judges...

Guest Judge: **karla k. morton**

karla k. morton, the 2010 Texas Poet Laureate, is a graduate of Texas A&M University, and a Board Member of the Greater Denton Arts Council. A Betsy Colquitt Award Winner, and an Indie National Book Award Winner, she has been widely published in literary journals, and is the author of six books of poetry: *Wee Cowrin' Timorous Beastie*, *Redefining Beauty*, *Becoming Superman*, *Stirring Goldfish*, *Karla K. Morton: New and Selected Works*, and *Names We've Never Known*. She has been featured on television, radio (NPR) and newspapers across the US. A native Texan, Morton has trekked thousands of miles in her Little Town, Texas Tour, bringing poetry and the arts into schools, colleges, universities, civic groups, cancer support groups, and festivals in communities across her beloved Texas.

Elementary School Judge: **Ken Fontenot**

Ken Fontenot has a Master's Degree in German Language and Literature from the University of Texas and has published two books of poems, the most recent having won the Austin Book Award in 1988. He earns his living as a printing services technician for the Texas Department of Transportation in Austin. In 2010 Slough Press brought out his first novel, *For Mr. Raindrinker: A Novel of New Orleans*.

Middle School Judge: **Mary Dallas**

Mary Dallas is active in the Austin poetry scene; her poetry has appeared in the Texas Poetry Calendar and in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*. Her art work (combining visual arts and poetry) has been sold in Austin art galleries and bookstores. She has been teaching college-level English at Austin Community College for 20 years and she also taught middle school and high school in the Austin Independent School District for five years.

High School Judge: **Jo Virgil**

Jo Virgil is the Community Outreach and Information Specialist for the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. She has worked as a feature writer, reporter, and columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and loves to dabble in any kind of writing, fiction and non-fiction. She has a Master of Journalism degree with a minor in Environmental Science, reflecting her love of writing as well as her deep appreciation of and respect for nature. She is an avid and eclectic reader. She serves on the Board of the Central Texas Storytelling Guild.

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Ephemera: Trout Lily

Upon the day
you
live
along with the ephemera
in your dark and glooming wood
that you brighten
In the gloaming
your stem slenderly arched in a “U” of uncertainty
of unearthly
transient petals peeled back
as if
afraid to show the world your abundance
which will last a day
only a day
and facing down from where you came
Down into the rich nurturing loam
as you
fall
and
break
and
die
But did it ever even matter?
That you never saw the sanctum of the sun
or
the trees cloaked in a mossy green
or
your livid petals floating off and into
the hair of some child laughing and spinning
in the air
lips stained with strawberries
that you will never know
but
did it ever matter?
Did you ever matter?

Isabella Taylor
homeschool

My Shadow... My Friend

I walk on the sand,
Where not only my feet land,
But my shadow,
Who is always with me as I walk
under the burning sun ...
Always following my sandy tracks...
A friend.

Every morning I coax him out of the night,
But I carry a secret of his...
...he is afraid of the dark.

Catherine Moy
Forest Trail Elementary

When It Rains

Rain is my favorite thing,
It makes me want to dance and sing.
I hate for it to go away,
But most people don't want it to stay.
Although it seems dark and wooshy,
It also feels soft and squishy.
I think rain is such a joy,
I like it even more than my toys.
Since it makes me dance and sing,
Rain, to me, means everything.

Keaton McCullough
Lakeway Elementary

Fall

The fresh smell of trees is in the air
and the birds squawk.
Fall is coming
and it can't be stopped
Leaves turning red
Leaves turning brown
Leaves turning all sorts of colors
before they hit the ground.
The cool fall breeze sways all the trees.
Fall is made to please.

David Winslett
St. Francis School

Kittens

Kittens are cuddly and cute
Even when they crawl in your boot.
On a sunny day,
They like to go out and play.

Kittens like to play with yarn,
And sleep all day in the barn
I like to watch them all day long.
Even if they do something wrong.

One day they will become cats.
And they will want to chase rats.
And if you try to cuddle you might get bitten
But I will always remember them as kittens.

Madison Blossman
Lakeway Elementary

The Rain Forest

What a wonderful day to be in the rain forest
The air is so smooth and light
As I swing through the trees,
I hear a near buzz of the birds and the bugs
My eyes look around me,
I see the sleeping, resting animals
and the tropical flowers in their best color.
The rain forest, the rain forest,
just so nice and peaceful
I slowly swing on a branch,
feeling the soft, velvety, damp leaf against my fur.
The air smells of mango and dew.
A slight mist is around me,
like a blanket being pulled over the sky and the trees.
As I shift my weight from side to side, I lounge
and grab the branch just in time!

My eyes open I am still in my glass dome stuck in there
gnawing on plastic flavored pellets.
People staring and laughing at me,
wanting me to copy them
I sit there so bored and sick of all this.
I wish I was,
I wish I was back in my rain forest,
my lovely, wonderful rain forest.

Audrey Blair
Forest Trail Elementary

Northern Lights

As I gaze at the spontaneous Colors in the water
All my emotions burst like a popping bubble,
While still looking like an aurora borealis.

Darius Moody
Forest Trail Elementary

World Peace

Will the dove
And her olive branch,
Bring peace to the world?
Or will it be
Music
With her beautiful rhythm and tranquility?

Will it be
Love
Holding her laurel wreath,
as queen of trees and sky?
Or will it be
Dance
With her beauty and grace?

Maris Alford
Austin International School

Spring Dance

The grass dances in the wind
Like a light butterfly
Flying through the blue sky
Brown leaves hang onto the trees,
just by a thread
Afraid to let go...
For winter is in the past now

Julia Breeden
Forest Trail Elementary

The Plains of Texas

The stars shine steadily in the night sky,
The tall grass waves below,
Across the plains of Texas.

The owl is hunting,
While the prairie dog settles in his burrow below,
Across the plains of Texas.

The ranch house is quiet,
And the hills stretch for miles,
Across the plains of Texas.

All is peaceful,
All is calm,
Across the plains of Texas.

Sophie Fuselier
Cedar Creek Elementary

Rainy Day

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap,
The sound of rain; thunder's joyous strain,
Tapping against my window pane.
Thunder's heart beating,
Wakes me up from my sleeping
So I try to doze off and dream again.

A flash of lightning
Is very much frightening,
For I think that she and thunder are fighting.
The sky was blue, the clouds are gray,
But the rain is starting to go away.
Tap, tap, tap, tap the sound of rain is going away,
Leaving the presence of my window pane.

Emily Robinett
Clayton Elementary

Sailing

As I run up to our thin slip I hear a faint jingling of
the halyard lines rapping softly against the elegant mast
As I step on the boat she rocks slowly from side to side
as I move carefully around the deck

I slowly putter her out of the slip as I take the tiller
a slight breeze blows tickling my arms
When I come out of the delta the vast blue ocean
sparkles in front of me I hear the faint sound
of the waves brushing against the fine grains
of the golden sand

I raise the sails and the boom sways slightly.
Before I knew it, the hull was cutting through the water,
the sail swayed proudly I could smell the fresh saltwater
as it splashed my face
When I carefully push the tiller starboard the boat sways
on the port hull a glistening dolphin flies out of the water
soaring like a shooting star

It's time to tack, the sail gets one more puff of air
and I pull the tiller, the sail starts to ruffle.
We are windward, the boom swings furiously
over my head missing me by inches.
Off the port bow, a small stingray plays
in the silky sand with some brown horseshoe crabs

I can see my rundown slip up ahead. As I venture closer
I hear the parrots chirp, hiding behind the dense curtains
of green jungle,
I throw the bumpers of the port and starboard sides.
As I jump off, the boat shakes adjusting to the weight
difference as I walk away.

I look back once more and think
Sailing is great!

*Liam Santa Cruz
Clayton Elementary*

Memory Lane

Huge waves dash up on the shore
and swallow the beach whole,
like a king claiming his kingdom.
Then the water rushes back to sea, hoping no buckets
will come to carry it away.
I inhale the salty sea air and exhale with a calming smile.
Ah! So peaceful.

My dad and I go for a walk on the beach in search of
unique seashells.
Wet, silky, velvet sand squishes between my toes
as we trek together.
Roaring laughter and joyous cries are heard
from every vacationer on the beach.
The salty ocean spray touches my lips;
I love the way it tastes.

At night, the sun sets and fireworks lift off
as far as the eye can see.
The black sky is lit up with dazzling streams of colorful
light for hours at a time.
Glowing bonfires warm every heart and bring families
and friends together.
My creamy, hot chocolate and book in hand, keep me
happy on this beautiful star lit night.
I shiver as a shrill breeze blows through the stars
and sends a quick chill down my back.

Moonlight shimmers across the ocean.
All is quiet and night has fallen.
As my mind travels down "Memory Lane."

Emma Lussier
Clayton Elementary

Why?

Why can't my room just be private to me?
Why can't my dad let me drive with a tee?
Why can't I wear shorts all year around?
Why can't I just stay and stand my own ground?
 Why can't I fly off of a cliff?
 Why can't my wrists not be as stiff?
 Why can't I be a wizard or king?

Then I could change all of those things.

Nihal Jayant Jere
Oak Hill Elementary

All About Me

I pumped blood into my wings for the very first time
and slowly saw my new gorgeous wings inflate.
 They were orange with black stripes
 and I felt so free.
 I tried to fly but I just kept falling.
As I finally took to the sky I felt so quick and wild.
I saw my brother still hanging in a silent cocoon,
 under a wilting stalk of milkweed.
The sky was big and blue and full of opportunities.
I stopped at a colorful patch of marigolds.
 I let down my new long tongue
 and took a sip of nectar.
 I felt like a piece of art
but felt even better in my heart.
 I found a comfy place to rest
 and slept and slept and slept.

Sofia Hutton
Clayton Elementary

The Great Day at the Beach

As I get out of the car, sand and rocks
 rattle through my feet
A cold breeze blows in my face
Screaming, playing, splashing freezing water,
Volleyball playing, dog paddling
 into the lime-green water
Tangerine soda and spicy Cheetos
Dripping and crackling in my mouth
Flavorful, juicy hot dogs and cheesy hamburgers grilling
Salome swimming,
Passing into the dark green seaweed
Flowing through the aquamarine water
Crabs crawling through the slippery floor
Walking into the prickly yellow-green grass
 sticking to your feet
Smoke, sausage, meat on old rusty tables and grills
Seagulls fighting for a rosy crab, chriping to each other
Waves, floaties moving away in the dark green water
Sundown, calm water, cars driving away, empty tables
Wow! I had a great fun time with my family
At the Beach!

*Karen Munoz
Clayton Elementary*

My Sisters

My sisters are nice and kind
Even when they start to sigh
They make me feel good and bad
Sometimes happy
Sometimes sad
I always know they'll make me laugh
Which leaves my troubles far behind
My sisters are with me wherever I go
My sisters how I love them so

*Lauren Blossman
Lakeway Elementary*

School's Out

The deafening beep from the bell
 echoed through the halls.

I couldn't believe my eyes
 I was out of the dungeon for summer.

Every kid screamed, it blew the roof off the place.

My eardrums were about to explode.

The feeling of my desk was so cold

It turned my hand blue.

The last couple of minutes in school

Seemed like hours, days, and years.

I finally got out

It was a miracle!

Jimmy Garcia
Clayton Elementary

Playing with Cats

Cats are fun,
Cats bite some.

Cats have claws,
Some have pink paws.

Cats have wiggly tails,
Cats claws are like nails.

Trey Estrada
Lakeway Elementary

My Baby Sister

My baby sister is so sweet

She is such a treat!

She loves to giggle and wiggle all day long.

Sometimes she'll even try to sing a song.

She loves her doll and her ball.

She loves to crawl but sometimes she takes a fall.

My sister is growing up so fast.

I can't believe how much time has passed.

My sister is so curious and clever.

Oh, how I wish she could stay little forever!

Emily Jewell Schlegel
Lakeway Elementary

Hummingbird Haiku

See a hummingbird
It flaps its wings so quickly
As it drinks nectar

Sarah Staten
Lakeway Elementary

Soft Munching

Soft munching,

Like a butterfly's wings flapping.

A gopher,

As brown as tree bark.

Soft munching,

Eating berries blue like the ocean.

There is still work to be done.

But yet,

I wait.

*Brenham Palmer
Forest Trail Elementary*

Shark!

Sharks are my favorite,
but leave them alone,
or there will be no sharks.
I will feel so sad if there are no sharks.
Sharks are my favorite animal.
I love them a lot
and so does my sister.
And that's it.

*Camille Fuselier
Cedar Creek Elementary*

Summer

splashing, laughing, and
having fun
O how much
I love the sun.

cool blue water O
how cold
makes me feel O
so bold.

no more school
for a while
O how the children
smile.

Miranda Jackson
St. Francis School

The Water

Blue as the sky,
Wavy as a prairie.
I see many fish people
By day and night, yet
I only have two friends
The moon and sky.
I rise and fall because
Of my friend the moon,

For I'm the ocean.

Marshall Stepp
Forbes Middle School

insomnia

hypnos is a fickle lord
faithless in his favor
lovely is his gentle blessing -
the sweetest of fantasies to be savored.

a rush of honey
and lavender
and you're gone,
to a land of cotton candy majesty;
set to drift
on a sea of feathery pillows

sometimes there is nothing
no quirky thoughts: just deep
left to the purest midnight
willingly caught in a cage of sleep

then there are the sleepless times
when he won't come
and you lie there, staring into space
closing your eyes, covering your face
but to no avail -
the sweet relief will not come
hypnos is with another one.

and then there are the blurring faces
lurid colors and waves of fear
images whirling in everlasting cyclones
utterly nonsensical creations wave and leer
you're perfectly aware that none of this is real
it doesn't matter, morning isn't here

and the pony attacks
and you're back in a place you can never be
and the twisted, sick monster looms below
you're trapped by the sea.
You know you're dreaming
you can't wake up
your face is in grass and mud
flash to carousel
then -
then the blare of Spanish screeches from the radio
and sunlight is streaming through the window
and you're left, lying there in a tangle of sweaty sheets
wondering which is preferable
insomnia + safety?
nightmare + sleep?

Ari Tolany
St. Francis School

I Am Not Alone Anymore

I am not alone anymore
I change diapers,
make bottles,
rock in a chair,
I am not alone anymore

I wake up in the middle of the night
to the sound of cries for hunger
I am not alone anymore.

I put another person
to bed at night
I get myself dressed
and another person dressed
I am not alone anymore

I get to go shopping
for someone new...
a baby brother
oh trust me
I am not alone anymore

*Alyssa Lavender
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

Bullies Don't Frighten Me At All

Making fun of people all day
Doing it in a different way
Bullies don't frighten me at all

Take my money
Think they're so funny
Bullies don't frighten me at all

They get in trouble at school
They think they're so cool
Bullies don't frighten me at all

They laugh at my friends
The abuse never ends
Bullies don't frighten me at all

Punch my face
A disgrace
Think they're cool
But they're fools
They make fun
Make me run
Make me cry
I want to die

Bullies don't frighten me at all

Victor Lee Floyd
Canyon Ridge Middle School

The Mile

Today I had to run the mile.
It wasn't fun. I didn't smile.
It was the teeth of a crocodile
Biting my legs as I ran the length of the Nile.

I wished there had been rain in the forecast.
Ms. Perry said, "Go," and everyone ran past.
They were cheetahs; they were so fast.
I was just trying not to be last.

I ran forever, but it was only a lap.
Between me and the others was an enormous gap.
I was trying so hard, but my legs were going to snap.
For my running time, no one would clap.

I really don't like doing the fitness gram.
I'd rather be taking a final exam.
"Are you bad at running?" Yes, I am.
"Do you want to do it again?" No, ma'am.

Haley Kehoe
Cedar Park Middle School

Describe

How do you describe
What is indescribable?
Simple, you do not

Anna Schaal
Canyon Ridge Middle School

Snow

Freezing, but warms the heart
come outside the snow's gonna start.
We can build snowmen, we can play
We can throw snowballs, come join the fray.
When it gets too cold and the snow starts seeming old,
we'll go inside and miss the snow
but eventually everything has to go

Tyler Bills
St. Francis School

The Bathroom Party

In the hallways are some strange stuff.
Especially on Fridays.
Things get tough and rough.
Of course it's going to be on a Friday.

Within the hallway is a bathroom.
It is big and stinky as well.
But we have to get back to the math room.
Just make sure you're back by the bell.

Only the boy's room is a party.
Somehow there is music.
And maybe we will be tardy.
But maybe the teachers won't mind it.

Bradley Wolosin
Canyon Ridge Middle School

The Predator of the Night

Hides behind a paper wall
May look weak and small
But if it pushes you, YOU WILL FALL!
For it's the Predator of the Night!

Nice and quiet in the light,
In the evening it's quite a fright,
Always clever and always right,
For it's the Predator of the Night.

Skin made of dark cowhide,
If it tells you something, it probably lied.
Dare to approach it and you might be fried.
For it's the Predator of the Night.

Feeds off of barnyard lives,
With K-9 teeth sharp as knives,
When you least expect it, it arrives
For it's the Predator of the Night.

Claudia Chibib
St. Francis School

She's leaving my mom said
She's gone my mom said
I've heard it 3 times
The heart's a funny thing it tricks you
That's what mine was doing tricking me
Of love
Of a friend
Dance is the air I breathe
I mean it
It
Ticks
Booms
And flows
You left me
Made me want to stop
Stop loving
Stop the
Ticks
Booms
And flowing
Stop breathing
So stop holding me back
Stop telling me I can't
I
Will
I
Will
Be the best I can be and you will not keep me from it
But
I love you
I love you
I love you

Ashley Gallagher
Canyon Ridge Middle School

Cranky Clouds

The sun rises and the moon falls.
The waves crash and the mist crawls.
The tide gets higher as the surfers crowd.
But out of nowhere there is a dark cloud.

The surfers yell and the cloud rumbles.
The sun shines and the waves tumble.
The cloud floats away in the arms of the air,
But the surfers seem not to care.

They would have been surfing no matter what.
They still would have been surfing even if the cloud
struck!

They go out and surf high tide and low
Surfers on your mark,
ready-set-go!

*Max Cooley
Canyon Rdige Middle School*

Sand

Cold or Hot
Wet or Dry
Free flowing
Always Moving
Shifting and Grating
Hugging Your Feet
Comforting Your Soles
Warming Your Hearts
Growing High as You Sculpt Me

I am Sand

*Cameron Wenzel
Forbes Middle School*

Serenity

The light over the horizon was so peaceful
As I looked out to the shimmering blue ocean
And all my worries faded away
As the cool salty water flowed over my sandy feet
And it seemed as if everything bad in the world
Just floated away in the tide beyond me.
Nothing mattered except that moment.

Alyssa Uribe
Forbes Middle School

Spring Rain Drops

It falls hard yet soft
with a gentleness that washes all away
with one little touch

It pelts
it pours
and the clouds soar

It makes mud
it makes a mess
yet pure beauty is next

The sun shines through
giving the world an endless blue
Life thrives
and a dark world says goodbye

Buds burst
bees buzz
blue birds sing

All it takes is a breath of rain
to create all these wonderful things

Chloe Schonfeld
Forbes Middle School

Children of the World

He runs
Green dewy field
Cleats pushing and kicking
Checkerboard ball
He is soccer

She moves
Dim empty room
Tall, spotless mirror
Firm pink shoes
She is dance

He waits
Small round table
No one but his opponent
Army of black and white men
He is chess

She stands
Vast wooden stage
Audience eagerly waiting
Tall black microphone
She is song

He breathes
Clear crystalline water
Arms and legs slicing
Pair of goggles
He is swim

She thinks
Small cluttered desk
Hand scribbling in black ink
Thin, lined paper
She is word

He looks
Vast close-cut course
Hands gripping and swinging
Small white ball
He is golf

She stirs
Granite counter top concealed
Wire whisk beating
Thin eggshells and creamy milk
She is food

They smile
Green grass and salty water
Hands clasping and grins forming
Round happy world
They are children.

Madeleine Montgomery
West Ridge Middle School

Flying on Land

When you're flying on land you feel so free
you never want to stop.
Flying on land comforts me, with the feel
of my skateboard under my feet.
No one really wants to do what I do
because they might get hurt.
For me, it's worth it to be going so fast
with no brakes, and slow to a stop
when I run out of hill.

Nathan May
Forbes Middles School

The Horrors of Time

Before, I laughed and played with them,
Now I deny them.

Before, I slept for hours and hours,
Now I have restless nights.

Before, I had no freedom,
Now I have no protection.

Before, I enchanted everyone with my voice,
Now it croaks and groans.

Before, I had no worries,
Now life is a struggle at every encounter.

Before, they read to me,
Now we don't talk.

Before, we were so close,
Now they are gone.

Before this I didn't know,
The Horrors of Time

Eugene Miravete
West Ridge Middle School

The Ultimate Challenge

The laughing gas,
to the just plain medicine.
The comfy beds,
to rock hard beds.
I've had it all.

The hundreds of stitches,
the red iodine,
and of course the scrumptious
popsicles,
and bed to bed service.

My life
as I go through the painful agony
of thinking
if I'm going to wake up or not.

That's my life,
my ultimate challenge as
I go through the heart surgeries
every few years.

The surgeries that
made me who I am now.
All that just to stay alive.

Kollin Bilski
Canyon Ridge Middle School

And Darkness Reigns

On the soil
In the seas
In the air
Darkness reigns

On the soil
blood seeps into
the Earth, mother of all,
turns her dirt to mud
and her rocks to red,
as eyes close
and darkness reigns.

In the sea
holes grow in the sides of ships
like mold on damp bread.
Sailors sink to the
black bottom,
their bleached white bones
creating a Picasso of horror
as ships burn
and darkness reigns.

In the air
limbs are ripped off machines
and men alike,
and as the newly dead
begin to fall,
the hearts of lovers
and family
are torn from the lifeless bodies
as men fall limp
and darkness reigns

*Maxwell Nichols
Park Hill Junior High
Dallas*

Elisabeth

Elisabeth is a girl
who loves to read,
but she is made fun of because
she is different, yes, different indeed.

She was made fun of,
every break, every lunch, every class.
She wished the year
would just go on and pass.

That year is now gone
and they all forgot,
about little Elisabeth's feelings
that they tied in a knot.

To them now she
does declare,
telling them of the girl
that they put in despair.

Even to this day
they still deny,
all the things they did
to make Elisabeth cry.

But to her,
she knows it's true.
I just hope this
never happens to you.

*Nicole Cravey
St. Francis School*

A Tritina: Never Coming Back

I sit and wait by the door
all packed and ready to go
my dad is coming back

my dad, my hero, my guardian is coming back
time ticks as I wait by the door
I wait to go

Tears start to fill my eyes as I wait to go
My hero is not coming back
He won't be coming back through this door

“Dad won't be coming back.”
I sit and wait to go for a dad
who won't walk through that door

*Parker Ausley
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

Tiger Storm

Black and orange lightning
Claws of steel so frightening
Stealing back the lives once taken
Scaring souls whose hearts are shaken

Living to give a hopeful birth
Killed by those who share this earth
A storm of raging malice forms
Inside the eyes of the tiger

*Sarah Hildreth
West Ridge Middle School*

My World

In my world there would be
Peace,
No Fighting,
No Yelling,
Nothing to Regret,

There would be kids
 who didn't have to hear parents fighting.
Parents who wouldn't have to worry
 about losing their jobs.
If they did how could they provide for their kids?

There would be no wars,
Nobody having to leave their families,
Worrying about them being safe,

There would be more kids playing outside,
Spending more time with their families.

There would be no hurt,
only happiness and loving care.

That would be my world.

*Peyton Randolph
Forbes Middle School*

Friends for Peace

If nobody would ever hate,
The world would be a peaceful place.

No violence, no fights, no knives, no guns,
It would be better for everyone.

Feelings of anger, sadness and pressure inside
Make important rules to get defied.

Trivial arguments turn into raging wars,
For reasons that are just too bizarre.

How do we put an end to this meaningless violence?
It always creates an atmosphere
of repugnance and abhorrence.

Massive onslaught on our freedom we must berate,
We must take action before it's too late.

Nobody would ever senselessly deace,
If we could all just establish –PEACE.

Then nobody would ever need to be irascible,
Instead we all would be quite affable.

Sentiments of war and violence would hightail,
Everywhere just peace would prevail.

If violence were to unanimously end,
The world would be a family of friends.

*Saarila Kenkare
Hill Country Middle School*

Ready to Write?

I stare at an empty page,
A marshmallow white screen,
The vertical line flashes impatiently back at me,
A tiny streak of lead on the egg white,
Appearing and then leaving for a short vacation.

“Are you ready yet?”

I sigh certainly,
I let my fingers tap dance,
The keyboard as their stage,
Soon the page is occupied with memories,
All written in a bland Times New Roman font,
Even though, the stroke repetitively flashes,
More secrets spill like tears,
When I feel as empty as a cloud,
A rainbow of fulfillment lets me hit 'File,'

Then 'Save.'

Selina Eshraghi
West Ridge Middle School

I Could Not Answer

Then the blind girl asked me,
“What is color?
It's supposed to be wonderful...”
And I could not answer.

The deaf girl asked me,
“What is music?
It's supposed to be wonderful.”
And I could not answer.

So the hungry man asked me,
What it was to be full
And the woman
In the wheelchair
Asked what it was to dance.

And to all,
I could not answer.

Jasmine C. Bell
McCallum High School

Shadows

Sometimes

I care more for my shadow than I do my own reflection
There's something about its graceful gloom
The way it bends and flows
Effortlessly off the sides of buildings,
Striking flawless in its facelessness

The way it stretches and thins stumpy, plump bodies
The way it forever holds a perfect poker face,
betraying nothing to the eager world
All its secrets, latent, swallowed
by the billowing darkness

The way it has freedom leaking from its fingertips
Its owner envious of its free will
Freedom to soar
Freedom to escape
Judgements and criticism belonging no where
Among its mysterious world

Nia Renee Thomas
Ann Richards School

Red: A Sonnet

As harsh as burgundy, ice cold vermilion
As sweet as juiced grapes and raspberry pulp,
As dark as a sinner's thought, so wrong, reptilian,
As fine as aged red wine's long awaited first gulp,
As bold as a new, maroon ruby stone,
As old as iron gates, all frosted with rust,
As good as sanguine berries, fully grown,
As bright as Mars, a scarlet ocean of dust,
As crisp as garnet hidden in piles of trash,
As big as giant Ayer's Rock, Australia,
As small as ladybugs buried in green grass,
As strong as the king boasting his regalia,
From rufescent beets to midnight fuchias and brick,
Red varies from light pink to dark oil slick.

Holly Jackson
Ann Richards School

The Sun

The sun.

Without it, plants can't grow.

Our feelings are based on judgement.

Judgement is based on our mind.

Our mind is based on love.

Love is based on our mind.

Our mind feels cold,

While our love is hot.

While our love is hot,

Our mind feels cold.

When our mind feels cold,

The sun is there.

To warm it up.

So we can once again,

Have fierce minds,

So we can grow plants that feel our love.

The sun grows that which is our love for the plants,
which feeds our love for the sun.

*McCoy Genfan
Katherine Anne Porter School
Wimberley*

Life of a Leaf

Once upon a time we lived together,
in a tree house: except we were the walls,
floor, ceiling, and spaces in between.
Birds sang of new beginnings,
violets were born, and all of us were happy,
as we learned how to feel alive.
But something greater than us
was coming.

It was summer, and we saw it
as a false happy ending. Scarce breezes
taught us the trifles of love,
as we blazed on with the reckless abandon
of adolescence. Spring passed and we matured
into the summer youths we were;
the taste of brief life
in our veins.

Our childhood became an elegy
penned for lost youth, as the inevitable
autumn came borne on the whispers of winter.
In these bitter days, we learned to doubt
everything we had come to believe in;
we saw the holes in all that was beautiful; and
we learned
to fall.

Abby Marshall
Westwood High School

Carpenter's Craft

At the Child Protective Services office again, Jimmy
mashing Legos under flickering fluorescent lights,
 case workers eulogize
for the boy un-mitered by a finisher's hands.

Jimmy, black walnut hardwood hair untussled
by caring hands, hums lewd songs he's overheard --
unscoured, unsmoothed, unpolished.

Flipping through his decade-long file as old as him,
bureaucrats chattering about the boy's tragedy,
 abandoned
before the framers could plumb crooked lines --

On Christmas Eve, too, the last fosters sick of tireless
and thankless days dealing with a child
with joints poorly fitted by alcoholic laborers.

And the CPS woman white and all smiles
doesn't know anything about the young soul's
 measurements,
a journeyman all lift and carry but no craft.

So Jimmy plays in the waiting room for a
 carpenter of boys
to come and to install cabinetry and casings
 and mahogany love,
to split the pencil line of the troubled past with a saw

from a future of rosettes and plinth blocks
and a chance to play with his own Legos
and for a craftsman to complete the punch list
 of Jimmy's life.

Ben Koons
Westwood High School

Let Me Drive You to the Hospital

Hoping seems so trivial, so meaningless
but often, as right now, it is all that I can do.
Just hours ago we never would have guessed
that hoping would seem so trivial, so meaningless.
Normalcy cracked and collapsed and amid this mess
our hopes are the flotsam we must cling to
and hoping seems so trivial, so meaningless
but often, as right now, it is all that we can do.

It astounds me that just hours ago,
we were bickering over what to make for dinner.
I am no longer hungry. People keep asking though.
It astounds me that just hours ago,
you complained that I was working too slow,
and you told me again to roll the dough thinner.
It astounds me that just hours ago,
we were bickering over what to make for dinner.

Now I am imagining all the casseroles
 we will be brought,
each baked in a different family's kitchen,
 by their mother,
each made in the way their mother taught.

Now I am imagining all the casseroles
 we will be brought.

Their mothers will use more cheese than they ought,
yet they have reason to bring one after another
now. I am imagining all the casseroles
 we will be brought,
each baked in a different family's kitchen,
 by their mother.

Collapsed in a metal chair opposite the double doors
to which my eyes are glued,

 I am lamenting all the things
you need your left side for.

I, as you were wheeled across the floor,
collapsed in a metal chair opposite the double doors
through which they rolled you.

 Hours ago, you tried to ignore
how your limbs went numb before you,
 as your ears begin to ring,
collapsed. In a metal chair opposite the double doors
to which my eyes are glued, I am lamenting
 all these things.

Katie Fullerton
Liberal Arts And Science Academy

Undecided

The right side of my brain,
got burnt.

I can not grasp,
the euphoria others
find in poetry.

I cope by realism.

My words are not
urbane, symphonic,
melodious.

I am a futile poet.

Harmonious my words
are not.

Eloquent are the words
of others.

The bliss of life
represented to me not by
way of poems.

I need to detoxify my soul.

Need to search.

Let the derisive words of
poetry,
soar above me.

Let the flurry of others,
go unnoticed.

I need to find some form
of elation.

A place to go,
and bury myself,
elude from the flippant
outside world
that surrounds me.

I need to seduce myself
in rich culture,
experiences,
memories.

Find comfort in that
that scares me.
Take the equitable out of my life.
I need word of the grammatical solitude.
My heart and life
to converge,
come together;
two puzzle pieces
expertly crafted to fit together
perfectly.

I'm ready for the
supercilious attitudes to evaporate,
and be replaced,
instead,
by open,
oxygenated,
breaths,
of fresh air.

My left brain yearns,
to stay in use,
not be replaced, by the crisply burnt
right
side.

*Hannah Elizabeth Huffman
Ann Richards School*

Plato's Apple Pie

I am a fighter,
A rambler,
Never stopping, why should I?
I live down under and way out:
People saying move on or get out.

I am a wannabe outlaw
Screaming at infinity
Because lying down in front of a car
Still makes me feel alive.

Will they forget me?
That girl who was always singing.
To you I'm already forgotten.
So why shouldn't I scream?
Or trespass just to laugh at the people watching me?

I live for tomorrow and the next day.
Because
What else is there to live for?
I live for myself. And no one else.
To laugh at you in your tower
As you play god of the people.

I live for rules.
I live to break them.
I am a fighter,
A rambler,
Never stopping
Should I?

Therese Celeste DeSaussure
Austin Waldorf School

Keys to Nowhere

Change myself
for sovereignty
and there will only be a
way to lose

No one knows me
not even you
I'm a tight box
sealed with no air
filled with ennui

Swirls collect around me
my ominous box
of tension
collects the sorrows of others

But I can see
even through my
gnarled mind

Cloud my thoughts
clear the toxic
I can see through
a key hole
leading to nothing
a hiatus nonexistent

Unlock what is to not
be found
and wait with
zealous fear

Monica Herrera
Ann Richards School

Losing Yourself, Me and I

You is gone.
Disappeared, evaporated, run off from Me and I.
They run, but can't stay together without You.
In the darkness I runs off,
Leaving Me alone in pain.
Me sits in a corner, crying,
Blinded.
Nothing without You and I.
Me tries to escape,
But the room tightens its hold on the only one left.
Trapped in the room in the silent darkness,
Me bangs on the walls.
A tremor shakes through from the floor to the ceiling.
Quickly, quietly, as not to raise alarm, Me bounds away
Towards You and I,
Someplace far off.
Now no Me, I, or You is left.
The room is quiet.
It strains for a sound.
Any sound.
A whisper?
A rustle?
Nothing.
The room recoils, shrinking
From a cavernous hall
To a blank little cell.
It craves sound.
Unable to take it,
The room twists in agony.
For without You, Me, and I,
It is nothing.
An empty soul, a wasted mind.
In the absence of its inhabitants,
The room
Cries
Itself
To sleep.

Luisa Venegoni
Liberal Arts & Science Academy

Help us Ma(fia)

Blinding lights streak the streets,
saturated with drooling drunk druggies
(or teens) too rich, too chic,
too BA to get a BA, laugh at the MBA.

Red buildings masked
in powder? Paint? Precursors,
bringers of blood maybe? What's the difference, right?

Inside and through the doors,
walls embrace the blue like the ocean,
of margaritas maybe or, lasers, strobes, make-up.
"I thought this was India?"

Sorry, but women don't dance and sing
Like the movies to show the hero her love.
They dance for the money.

No more sweet doves.

Sorry, but it's much more
than just elephants, saris and the Taj Majal.

The western wave plagues like the undead.

They are coming...
before long every third-world country will plunge
into clubs, raves and mafias.
They may start small,

but they rise as quick as they fall.
I'm out, I got a job to do,
Sorry, not at some outsourced firm.

I may not have a BA or an MBA,
I may not say "Thank you, come again!" but,
I deal in Western sin

And my people are buying.

Sharran Sukumaran
Westwood High School

Up

Twisted up
In my own melodrama
I wanted to be Cinderella
Or Wendy,
From *Peter Pan*.
Hoping I would go to the magic Castle
“where dreams come true”
Wishing, the boy who never
Grew up
Would take me away
So I didn't have to either.

The
 Innocence
 Is
 Fading.

And suddenly, you can't call mom and dad anymore.
Like, Cinderella
Ever so lost,
Trapped in her small
Room of
Which seems like eternity.

Get over it,
Everyone must grow
Up
They say.
I wish time could stop
And rewind 'til I was three again.
The golden care free days
Where I had
No worries.
But as we all know,
Time won't stop
Ticking
Not for you,
Not for me.

We are all expected to grow and have
moreandmore responsibilities
As we do.
Take me, take me
Away.
So I will never
Ever be grown
Up.
No sign of a blue castle
And no Peter Pan.

*Allyese Marie Goodwin
Ann Richards School*

My Web

It murmurs your name.
Every skipped beat is a reply to the butterflies,
Fluttering passionately at the sound of your name.
But between thuds of its thunderous pumping in my
 chest,
It's beating out of a false truth.

Not a lie; I wouldn't call it that.
I adore you, and it's true.
Or maybe I just adore what you stand for.
I love the idea of love.
How can you love someone and in the same breath,
Lust for so many things above him?

No, it's not a lie at all.
I do crave you, I do want you,
And above all I need you for this moment.
Until I find something else, and I'll be done.
I'll add you to my collection of broken hearts.
They're piled high in a corner somewhere, forgotten.

You'll see that you're nothing more
 than a pawn in my games.
You're nothing more than temporary.
But oh, how I'll long for you
 when you wise up and leave.
I'll miss you after you back down from this challenge
 I've forced upon you.

I have been there, love.
My heart is long gone, battered, and bruised.
It would take a miracle to bring me back.
Forgive me for taking it out on you.
But I know you don't mind, because you love me.
And I love you too... for now.

Kristal Cheyenne Jackson
Reagan High School

Hated

Born with wings,
Black as night.
Because I am different,
I fight the hate inside me,
Growing more and more.
I'm so hollow...
Lonely,
And sore.
I face the skies,
As I fall, names of demons I am called.
Bruised and cut they beat me again,
They'll always hate me 'til the end!
I've given up my dreams,
All because I was born with wings.

*Solomon Riggins
Ozen High School (Beaumont)*

I am not a mirror

trapped in a maze of preconceptions
tangled syllables,
slip through,
writhing.
waiting to be picked apart

Categorized?

meshed together coherently -
a mess of utopian introspection,
typical,

synapses misfiring
not firing.
nothing fits like it should

*Stryker Kelly-Thompson
Ann Richards School*

End

Hope lifted him above the soil,
The muddy earth impeding flight,
And still the ancient tried to toil,
He tried to run across a land
That wasn't made for rush at all,
His small ability and might
Was not his chasers' and would fall
At the approaching soldiers' hand.

He didn't think of mercy - none
The forces close behind would give.
The legs he owned would have to run
In speed, as the Bithynians closed.
The tiny gap - the spear flew by -
Unseen, a burst of speed to live,
The open door, and some black fly
Was smashed apart from where it posed.

He entered home, and left his ruin
Behind by seconds, walls, and air.
A scream outside: "What is he doing?"
"It's clear," another said, "he's hid.
He can't, however, hide from Rome.
Whatever is his fate, it's fair."
Inside, below a wooden dome,
The exile thought about his bid.

With little choice, the man sat down.
The soldiers didn't search his house:
Instead they rested with a frown
And looked outside for secret paths.
The general would not escape,
Could not unless he was a mouse,
And chose to let the hunters gape
And let increase their fading wraths.

There still was time before the men
Of Rome would come, and break, and kill.

There weren't many - even ten
Could easily collapse the hut.
He'd live until their coming – life
was precious, and he'd have his fill.
So much of it had been in strife!
Now, it completed, all was shut.

He picked at bread, this last of meals.
It seemed more aged than he, the taste
Was diminished - time! "How it steals!"
He stopped consumption: sans a need,
Without an appetite, the throat
Could not let in the softest paste.
There was no saving now, no moat,
So he increased again his speed.

He took the poison, gazing out
Where Legion ranks grew, marching in.
Again he opened doors, a bout
Suggesting to the Roman force -
He didn't fight, but just declared:
"Is killing ancient men a sin?
They'd die soon anyway - who cared?
I'll save you the trouble, end the source."

Before he could be stopped, he brought
The cup of venom to his mouth.
A few Bithynians were distraught,
Those that would take it hard to cope.
Still, Hannibal of Barca drank.
It acted. Turning to the south,
A single heart that moment sank,
And with it died an empire's hope.

Yury Salavatovich Aglyamov
Liberal Arts and Science Academy

I Dreamt About Her Past

A dream is a distorted memory,
just like the one that brought me to my knees.
Trapped within the walls of a messy

prison where in my hands I had the key,
but not the courage to escape her wrath.
Even the blind clearly could go see.

Her opulence that held her in a bath
of kindness and affection as a friend.
But beneath the muscle is a path

troubling and abusive to one's mind.
It's like that dream that stemmed from the syndrome.
I broke into a sweat when it did end.

I stood outside a lavish stucco home.
Its marble columns showed its radiance.
But within its walls was nothing but chrome,

from the rooms' perfect light and brilliance.
I found a garden spread behind the house.
And crowds of poppies blooming at such potency.

Then I saw a woman that was doused
With a limpid soul for charity.
Never in her could anger be aroused.

A memory flashed and in clarity,
I saw her sit among her children's love
and tenderness was all that I could see.

Then without any warning from above,
a wall of flames came smashing from either side.
And there I was trapped with the horror of

the sound of the lost family as they cried
and flames kept scaling walls in their rejoice
and once the smoke dispersed and flames did die

I heard no voices. I could escape at last
And as I woke, I thought of traces from her past.

Sofia Dyer
Liberal Arts and Science Academy

Snowfall

Smooth icy blankets of pearly snow
Cover the grass and the red brick chimney tops.

Everything turns clear,
Even the leaves on a tree.
Its bark becomes a rich transparent white
Blended in with everything else.

Each snowflake drops
with a
Gentle,
soothing glide.
It drops like
it has an eternity.
Each snowflake
A treasured shape and design.

The sun soars and
Away
The
Snow
Goes
Until
Next winter
You
will
see it
Again.

Raven Moreno
Ann Richards School

About the Artists...

Christine Gilbert (cover art) paints in watercolors and acrylics and is developing her photography and Photoshop skills. Her studio is with the Art Space Co-op at 2309 Thornton Road, Studio J. She is a member of the Waterloo Watercolor Group and the Austin Visual Arts Association. A writer and editor, she has had poems published in the AIPF anthologies. She has a website at:
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Glynn Monroe Irby has been published in previous AIPF anthologies as well as the Houston Poetry Fest anthologies, The Spiky Palm, Sol Magazine, Galaxy Journal, Poetz e-zine, Curbside Review, and others; Irby has been an invited poet for many reading venues in Texas; is a member of the Galveston Poets' Roundtable, the Poetry Society of Texas, and selected as one of the "Bards of the Bayou." Irby is the co-author and designer of the book, 3 Savanna Blue; the cover designer for nineteen other books, and has marketed and displayed photographic art in galleries, homes, and offices. He is a Professional Member of the American Society of Interior Designers, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history from the University of Texas, Austin, including previous studies at the University of Houston, Brazosport College, and Edinburgh University, Scotland, with subsequent graduate studies in architecture at the University of Houston.

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Editor's note...

The editor wishes to thank all the hundreds of students who bravely shared their work with us. For without their willingness to share their personal vision and creative insights, there would be no anthology. Another thank you goes to the teachers and parents who nurture our next generation of poets.

Writer, poet, editor, venue host Deb Akers has been a long time volunteer with the Austin International Poetry Festival and served as its 2008 chairman. She is on the board of directors of *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* where she also serves as its managing editor. She is a member of the Austin Poetry Society and the Writer's League of Texas.

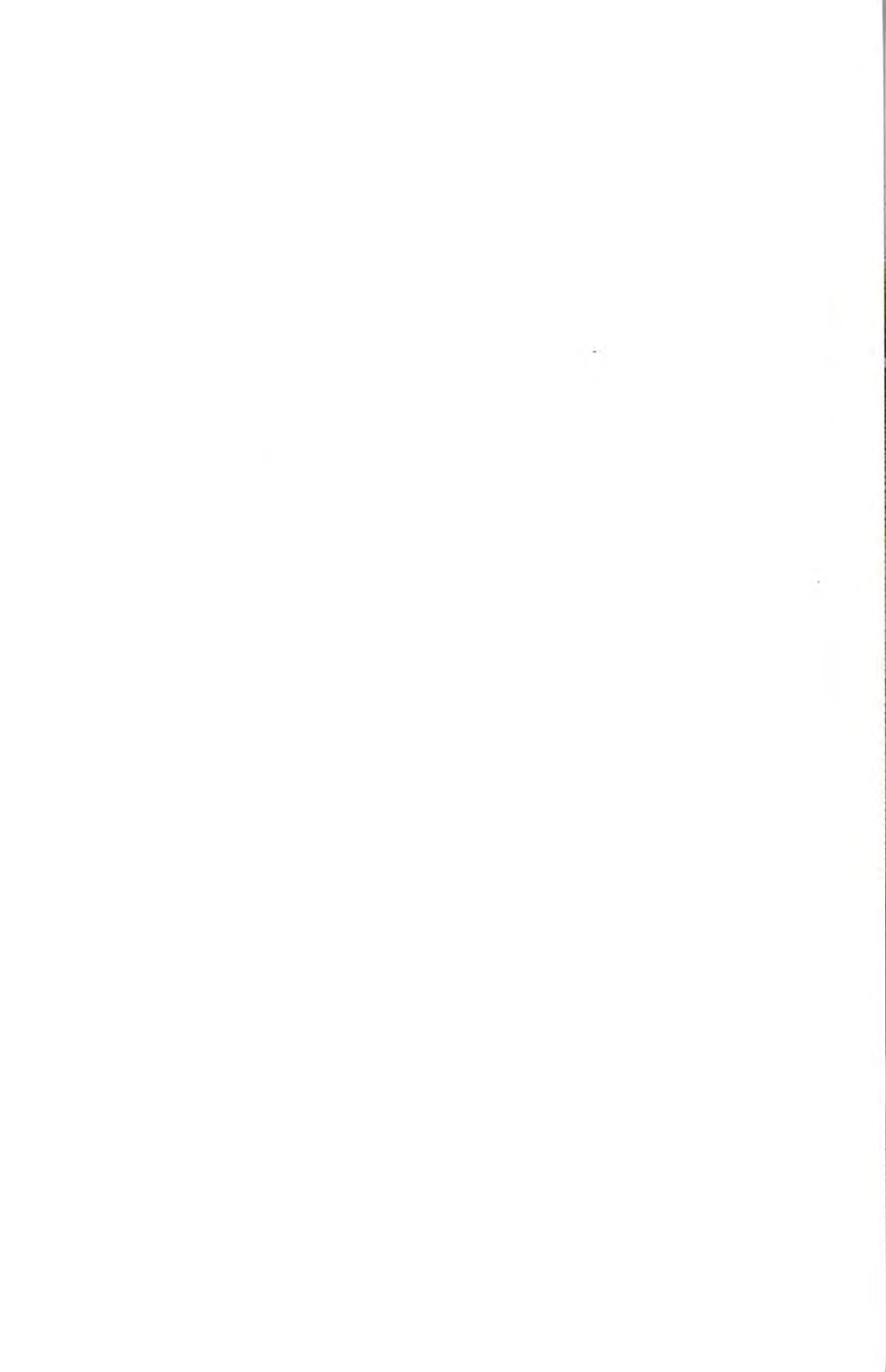
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