

# di-vêrsé-city 2012

AUSTIN INTERNATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL  
20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EDITION

## ANTHOLOGY



*Edited by*

**BARBARA YOUNGBLOOD CARR**



**di-vêrsé-city**  
**2012**  
**Anthology**  
**of the**  
**Austin International**  
**Poetry Festival**

**Edited by**

Barbara Youngblood Carr

**Co-Edited by**

Nancy Fierstien

Susan Beall Summers

John Berry

Jill Bingamon

Lynn-Wheeler Brandstetter

Elneta Owens

Jos Masonmazou

**Cover Art by Luis Cuellar**

**Cover Design by Rebecca Byrd Bretz**



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## Preface

Dreams. We all have them. We dream about fame, riches, love, a good life with less stress or at the very least a warm, cozy home and food to fill our bellies for ourselves and our families.

But poets also dream of their words changing the world—or as a minimum to at least help make bad or unfair government decisions change in order to make all citizens' lives better and help create a perfect world of peace and beauty where we can all exist together in harmony.

And poets are always dreaming. They dream all the time and they have their muses (we poets don't speak of that out loud much for fear of others thinking us unstable). Poets usually hear their muses—but some do not listen to their muses—and it is only when poets listen carefully and are truly in tune with their muses that they can be true to themselves about the reality of their contributions to creativity that others can bond with and be inspired by.

And among all those poetic dreamers, who truly listen, several of note live amongst us who followed their dreams. They are the Four Founders of the Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF): Herman Nelson; John Berry; Thom the World Poet and Sue Littleton. And as we celebrate this twentieth AIPF in September 2012, we pay homage to our Founders who had the dream of Austin holding an AIPF twenty years ago—and the vision to hold, over the years, the largest un-juried Poetry Festival in the U.S.

Throughout these twenty years (of which I have been fortunate to be involved with AIPF for nineteen of those years since I moved to Austin in what was supposed to be retirement years)—many others—both changing API Board members and volunteers—have given freely of their time and service to ensure that our unique Festival continues.

Our chosen cover art is a reminder of the great, beautiful city of Austin, Texas that we are privileged to live in where art and music are what make Austin one of the liveliest towns bursting with creativity in the U.S.

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As other guest Editors of the annual Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF) have said, the poems submitted for possible publication in this year's edition were unique, creative endeavors replete with personal reflections; rites of passage; ancestry; travel; death; war; justice; nature and love. Some were negative about the inequalities of life, while others sang with the beauty of location or place in time.

Choices of those selected (from over 500 submissions) for inclusion in this Anthology from our blind reading were decided upon by eight readers, including myself. The poems printed here are just a sampling of many fine poems submitted. As we read them we discovered many metaphors for life and love. We wish we could have published them all—but time and funding will not permit that.

Among the poems I, as Editor, with my co-readers, have read and chosen to be published in this year's diverse 'city Anthology, you will find poems reflecting old, new, relaxed and modern life situations—with poems from familiar voices as well as new, frenetic poetry from some first-time poetic voices as well.

I would like to thank my Co-Editors, Nancy Fierstein; Susan Beall Summers; John Berry; Jill Bingamon; Lynn-Wheeler Brandstetter; Elneta Owens; and Jos Masonmazou whose assistance greatly shaped this collection. Among all the many fine poems entered for consideration, we searched for artistry, candor, ingenuity, uniqueness, etc. and great endings that left us with a sense of wonder and wanting more.

We hope, dear readers, you will enjoy the selections in this edition and be inspired to create your own new poetry now and forever.

And always remember that: *"Today is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never change."*

—Chief Seattle

**Barbara Youngblood Carr**  
**Editor, 2012**



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## **Early Morning Train to Ancona Marittima**

Dawn kindles clouds like breath over tinder.  
A lark bursts from the stationmaster's roof  
in the scarce currency of its pleated wings.  
Workweek passengers amble to railcars  
as though resigned to never return home,  
minds tethered to clocks, numbered tracks.  
My gaze drifts up to the lark, its wild flight  
over a woman chasing the train, watching  
me hold my breath with her eyes.

**Jeffrey Alfier**

**Torrance, CA**

## **Suddenly You**

I cut into a cantaloupe this morning,  
the fresh smell rising like a bird in the air,  
spooned out the gooey seeds from each half  
of this ground-born, pale brown Tuscan fruit,  
and sliced up the sun-warmed, reticulated hide  
as you did once, into eight tricolor gondolas:  
one broad swath beneath the firm orange flesh,  
a dozen straight chops down to the green rind,  
then each boat set out with a small plate and fork  
and the saltshaker nearby. Suddenly you rose  
above me, like Strega Nona, spatula in hand,  
bacon frying on the stove, hot grease popping,  
pancake batter mixed in a big striped bowl.  
You said to hurry up and eat, or I'd be late,  
while I brooded over some English paper  
or Latin test or dismal lab report, my nose  
bent down, ostrich-like, to my own small world.  
Still there, I looked up from the cantaloupe  
and pondered, holding my knife in the air,  
how seldom I had cooked for my own children,

---

your sweet hotcakes or Grandma Witch's spaghetti,  
and how the books I bought at the estate sale  
yesterday were all about southern California  
and desert ghost towns, alive with history,  
when my daughter spotted two hawks high in a tree  
in our backyard, one with a dead thing in its talons,  
that flew off as we rushed out for a better look,  
their wings knifing up, the ruckus of the blue jays  
simmering down, your memory evaporating  
like alpine desert air: thin, dry, and melon-scented.

**Robert Allen**  
San Antonio, TX

### **Perspective: The Linen Cabinet**

The antiqued brass knobs on the linen cabinet  
falsify their age. Little indentations

form angel wings that ring the circle. They're not  
brass, nor antique in this forty-year old house.

Marks of wear from others whom I'll never know  
and my own hands diminish—accent its deceit.

But that is the way of things: the pretense to be  
what they are not—erodes. But they serve.

The wood doors at least are thick and dark,  
satisfyingly solid beneath my touch.

**Gloria Amescua**  
Austin, TX

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## **Call This Home**

Call this place home, in time of fall's descent  
Moon in the window, browned blossoms bent  
Frost glimmers in morning sun

I am home, yet not at home  
And this place where I hang my hat  
Not quite the place where my heart can rest

Coming home seen through a veil  
This lifetime is both transparent and rent,  
Translucent and bright

With pain of loss and abundance of blessings  
I hang my hat but my heart spills itself  
wide as the Milky Way

The troubadour echoes a song of grief  
My sonnet remembers a lover's sigh  
Amidst the cry of geese headed south  
My hat cannot hang as the wall and  
even the hook are gone  
But the memory of how I thought  
it would be mine to keep lingers on

**Wendy Brown-Baez**  
**Fridley, MN**

---

## Great is Diana

Like softly muttering lightning far aview, Nature is beautiful, just look,  
you'll see—More beautiful than paint or poetry, More beautiful than aught  
our brains can brew, Than things our recent artists draw or hew, As  
beautiful as flower to a bee, As spider to the wasp, or wasp to me With  
orange wings, rest deep metallic blue.

Our arts give beauties echos at their bests, Our best acknowledges the Muse  
midwife, above all kings, above all Kings of kings, Diana, whose  
milky-nippled myriad breasts feed every art as well as every life, whose  
ancient timeless beauty gives birth to all things.

**John Berry**  
Austin, TX

## Unanswered Prayers

Maybe I'm praying for the wrong things.  
So, what should I be praying for?  
Let me think. Let me feel my way  
around in this marveling darkness  
for the touch of an angel, the long-lost  
lover gone to a better place.  
Maybe I'm missing something essential,  
talking over wisdom when I should be listening  
intently for audible clues, leading tones.  
And maybe I'm just praying for the wrong things,  
over and over like a habitual criminal,  
who can't get his mind out of the gutter  
or slay his obsessions. Praying, yes—  
but for the wrong things.  
I'm not begging for a miracle, mind you.  
I'm not out to win the lottery  
or corner the market on corn futures  
or take the world by storm after a lingering drought.



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I just need to learn how to better appreciate,  
hopefully understand, maybe even  
come to accept this shattered  
world I chance to inhabit—  
at least the pieces I'm given  
in exchange for my attention.

**Joe Blanda**  
Austin, TX

### **I Look Up from Reading**

I look up from reading,  
Across the apartment and into  
Our bedroom where  
You stand, dressing, a  
Long figure, taught and graceful.

I breathe slow trying to  
Appreciate the view  
Now  
Without grasping onto this  
Image of you  
Youthful and lean.

These bodies of ours will  
Age, and one day  
Looking up from my reading, finding  
You there, dressing, after  
Ten years—twenty—have  
Passed through us, I want  
No irrational reflections from  
These days to  
Contaminate my  
Eyes.

**Laura Brown**  
Austin, TX

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## **A Time Comes**

It is not that I will not reach up  
to touch your hair on the pillow  
or set out a second cup  
when the coffee is done, I will,  
and I will wonder where all  
the hangers came from  
that crowd my closet  
and why my socks  
have so much room in their drawer,  
why no one rearranges the rocks  
that decorate the garden  
or moves the furniture when I am gone.  
I will miss bringing you the glass  
and setting the basin by the bed.  
I held you as long as you could stand it  
but I understand, I can see,  
a time comes when it's not  
enough to be helped and held,  
to be touched and waited on  
although I would still  
have done it gladly.

## **Del Cain**

**Saginaw, TX**

## **Room of the Day**

Midnight blue comforter rolls back -  
uncovers the bed of the sky at dawn.  
Pale blue and white sheets and salty  
breezes freshen the air.

Wavelets tumble out of bed, waking  
with slow somersaults, then bubbling  
with energy to explore the beach of  
their lives.

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As they venture along, gurgling with  
laughter under the sparkling sun,  
they encounter the sandy footprints of  
others and rush to catch up.

**Claire Vogel Camargo**  
Austin, TX

**Rebecca**

I dread the dawn when I must go  
and not soon see  
that awkward smile you learned  
just yesterday  
to know the empty nothingness  
where I now feel  
your small body cradled in my arms,  
your sweet breath against my face.  
Who will you be when I see you next?  
Will you wear pink ribbons tied in tiny bows  
to dress your wispy locks?  
I will hold you in my mind  
to shut out sounds of  
enmity and war  
May God keep you safe.  
If I am lost and never again  
see your angelic face,  
know that I am  
I am a part of who you are,  
who you will become

**Hal C Clark**  
Livingston, TX

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## **Artifact**

His towel hung by the shower  
for weeks after he left.  
I thought about his skin cells

surviving somewhere  
between the fibers. At night,  
after I washed away the dirt

of the day, I pressed the towel  
to my face and elbows. I left  
pieces of myself behind, to live  
and love like we no longer could.

**Erin Rose Coffin**  
**Austin, TX**

## **The Sadness of a Playground in the Rain**

I doubt that squirrels miss  
being chased up trees by barking dogs.  
In rain, children cannot play  
and can only ponder the emptiness  
of not running, the silence of not shouting.  
Incipient lives pause, hang there,  
siphoned of joy, sucked into  
a rainy day whirlpool.  
Despite bright names on a hundred crayons,  
a classroom hour with a coloring book  
lacks the ripening color of spring,  
imitates a bland and flavorless sky.  
So much innocent humanity never  
comes outside to grasp games  
in imagination's fist.  
Inky nothingness replaces a creative day  
and washes a chunk of childhood away,  
voiceless, in a downpour  
streaming down the cheek of time.

**Elzy Cogswell,**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Des Jeunes**

During dawn's fragile hours, a crawling  
Caravan of cabs embarks and disembarks  
Youths drunk on self-indulgence. Night,  
An impartial entity, aborts them en masse.  
Staggering out of seedy bars, they laugh  
Uproariously up and down San Miguel  
De Allende's cobblestones.  
Under an awning, two sleepy waiters  
Share a cigarette, exchange friendly  
Banter under dimmed streetlights.  
In the heavens, a crescent moon recedes  
Behind silhouetted mountains sheltering  
A murmur of dreamers.

## **Julieta Corpus** Weslaco, TX

### **Streaming Love**

Morning sun strikes ancient glow  
in limestone smooth and sinuous,  
where sculpting waters fall and flow,  
and season's rain is tenuous.  
Once soaring cells of thunderheads,  
sweet fallen water now renews  
its love affair with stony beds  
and sighs to give the air the news.  
The stone has long laid parched for this,  
and colors, now, with water's glow.  
It arches to the soft caress  
and yields to plunging undertow.  
I want to live that love affair  
of running stream and rubbing stone—  
to feel the liquid lick me bare,  
to feel the rock against my bone.  
I shucked down, slunk down, shrunk down, sucked  
down air—sweet breath!—into chest cold tight,  
then down through swell and shimmer sunk  
to stroke swift beams of dreamy light.

## **Robin Cravey** Austin, TX

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## **William's Well**

The Well within that has no bottom  
Whispers the Ancient Songs of Life  
Guides the echoes to lofts above  
Tuned to the harmonic rhythm called Grace  
Cleanses the dust-speckled bodies  
Dancing across universes that transverse  
Time and Space and Maritime Illusions  
Like butterflies monarched with the Tree of Life  
Anchored to the Clam Shell imbedded  
Deep within where William delves  
Protected from obtrusion of human thought  
The mind disease  
Yet open to vibrational sounds that transcend  
white light and black holes.  
The Well buoys the nourishment  
To breathe and breathe again.  
That child-like Dream....William's Well

**William T. Dawson**  
**Mountainair, NM**

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## **Dreaming of the Poor**

The poor watch the sun  
walk away on a dusty road,  
oblivious to the whisper of the corn  
and dust rising from its bed  
draws orphan homes  
by the side of the road, orphan homes  
sending their white, old  
and brittle prayers, later  
nailed to the walls of churches,  
poorly attended churches,  
although crosses on these walls  
often twist into slurred words  
on the mouths of drill sergeants,  
crosses sometimes humming  
happy tunes among  
hieroglyphs of despair. You passing by  
the gray walls of poverty,  
you think of permanence, of salvation  
as you write checks  
in the deep of night.  
And the moon rising  
slowly over your shoulder  
enters the dreaming of the poor,  
its long hair turning  
silver overnight.

**Andre de Korvin**  
**Sugar Land, TX**

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## Meeting the train: A Woman's Memory Part 2

I stand waiting as the train unloads.  
He is here; his face, void of expression.  
I am glad he is one of the "honor guards"  
and not the one being "honored" today.

It is selfish of me.  
As I look into the eyes of the waiting woman,  
this mother, I see the all consuming sorrow.  
The blankness of grief.

She holds her body rigidly,  
as if giving birth again, as her child,  
the light of her life, is unloaded.  
This daughter of her old age.

I watch as my husband stands  
Unswervingly silent in the dry,  
dusty morning air; tumbleweeds  
ramble along like quiet, brown escorts.

A Roseate Spoonbill perches atop the flag.  
It's irreverent song, a sharp contrast  
to the sibilant silence of those in our wake.  
No one moves to shoo it away.

I see Robert, so familiar, yet different.  
I cannot know in this moment of the horrors  
to come; of nightmares and screams so desperate  
they will haunt my own dreams forever.

But for now, it is enough  
to see this dignified man  
standing stalwart and solemn  
giving honor to a fallen comrade.

**Patricia Dixon,  
New Orleans, LA**



---

## **Lost and Found**

Hide and seek  
is the game she plays daily with life  
Painful soul wounds lurk underneath  
oppressive weight  
shapeless clothes  
unkempt hair  
Other self-esteem poisons  
chip away at confidence bit by bit  
Until mirror reflects unrecognizable;  
Constant tears  
present even in smiles

Shattered, she trembles  
when confronted with powerful love  
Cracks of light brighten  
dark despair  
Choice becomes challenge  
to walk boldly into new life  
holding her head high...  
Time strips everything  
hindering esteem  
She stretches and grows,  
falling deeply in love  
With herself again

**Marcie Eanes**  
**Racine, WI**

---

## **Buffalo**

A rancher's trophy hobby,  
huddled on the south side of a north fence,  
woolly bodies jingling school-day history  
from the coins in my pockets:  
Dark rumbling herds, tsunami of the plains,  
teepees and eagle feathers giving way  
to buffalo hunters and stagecoaches,  
to cornfields and superhighways,  
to bronze monuments and exotic pets.  
Icons from my nickels testament to things lost,  
forgotten costs, moving me to get out of my car  
and stand before them hand-over-heart.

**Rose Marie Eash**  
**San Antonio, TX**

## **Sweet Warm Strong**

This morning under a milky sun  
I drank the espresso and honey  
you left me  
watched wild things saunter or soar out of the woods  
behind my house: An ambling possum, squabbling blue jays,  
and my favorite, the feral Tom. If I feed him  
he leaves me  
a bird, a mouse, himself—  
Will he ever call me home?  
Today an urgent appointment with freedom  
beckons you both away, and I need to warm my coffee  
but I might miss  
the way the warblers flirt and flit

---

singing what they want  
along the fence line, past the hammock  
where you held my hand that time—

It is a cold good  
the sweet sip I cup  
in my not-so-open palm  
as long as you let me.

**Kelly Ann Ellis**  
**Houston, TX**

### **To Be a Man**

When I was young I had just begun my quest to understand  
How to face my pains without complaint and whether I ought to lend a hand  
Should I always conform comfortably or should I stoically take a stand  
Just what does being human mean and what does it take to make a man  
Although I might not always hit the bar, the bar is set for me  
A man may sacrifice his life, but never his integrity  
He works faithfully for the future and makes dreams reality  
But, alas, and thus unfortunately...  
As I searched for men to emulate I soon became dismayed  
Too many men do not truly care or too often they are afraid  
For in order to make a difference there is always a price that must be paid  
To be a man is to be criticized until you persevere  
It means never willing to compromise as they whisper promises in your ear  
It means staying by your lady's side when she sheds her tears  
To be a man is to become much more than what it first appears

**Mark Fennell**  
**Cedar Park, TX**

---

## **Revelations**

Betcha didn't know  
that the apes pray, too.  
I've seen it happen  
at the local zoo.

That ape sitting still  
in the corner of its cage  
tunes you and me out  
when he's trying to page

his redeemer. One day,  
I was quite blessed to see  
(when he opened his eyes)  
the clear gist of his plea –

“Please let me evolve.  
Set me free. Yes, You can,  
if You will it. I promise  
to meditate, Man!”

His prospects that day  
didn't look good to me.  
But then, what do I know?  
Is it Reality?

**Nancy Fierstien**  
**Dripping Springs, TX**

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## **Write Brain, Left Brain**

I vacuum up words, file them away  
in the dustbin of my mind. When I try  
to retrieve them, to write them down,  
to sort the senseless assortment, the chaos  
disgorges a whirled tangle of empty folders  
swirled together with pages of mental notes,  
motes in the shaft of my enlightened,  
inspired foray. It's the subtext that eludes  
me—the decision to make revisions  
based on illusive phrases threaded in my psyche.  
Or did I think that my left brain left alone  
would automatically alphabetize the labels  
of language under "Logical Links?"  
Meanwhile my hand carries on without me,  
making a remarkable lapsus calami no doubt,  
but it's a moot point because my pen is dry.

**Mona Follis**  
**Simonton, TX**

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## Lost Birds

It was never night when they came.  
They were bold enough only for day,  
driving up in dusty black Buicks.  
They were polite, but firm,  
their plan to pick the palest,  
leave the rest of us behind to burn  
ever darker in the desert glare.  
One morning as the dew began to dry,  
they drove off with my sister  
arranged in a spotless back seat.

She was three, a spry little Navajo  
who'd sprint around the yard,  
lugging a tiny plastic bucket,  
spilling sand over her glistening body.  
She loved to nuzzle my hand  
like a pet hoping to comfort its owner.  
I was twelve, a boy already grown up,  
the hurt of life sharp in my body.  
When she left, I became a lost bird,  
alone in a leafless tree.

It took me thirty years to find my sister,  
an adopted daughter in New York City,  
that province of displaced wanderers.  
She took me about the city to soak up the life  
she had been handed.  
She told me that no gift of well-meaning people  
had ever replaced the memory of the kiss I once gave her  
on her sandy cheek when she was three  
and I was twelve,  
and no one was counting the years.

**Larry L. Fontenot**  
**Sugar Land, TX**

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## **Adath Emeth: “Children of Truth”**

I found them in the barrio,  
my great-grandparents from Valkowisk,  
unexpected their location near the Fiesta  
Motel and Bolillo Bakery.

At Adath Emeth Cemetery they are buried  
in concrete-lined crypts covered with gravel  
fired white in the Texas sun. Summer green  
lawns vibrate from the neighboring highways' hum.

I place stones on their graves, wonder if  
their spirits wander next door to Canino's  
Farmer's Market, sampling only the plumpest  
bananas, juiciest mangoes, and sweetest melons,

forbidden fruit no more,  
these gifts from the Almighty  
by way of McAllen, Brownsville, Mexico,  
or maybe they feast on flautas at Tampico's.

Fiddling Klezmerim drift from graves,  
join the merry Mariachis.  
Tonight Mendel and Esther dance,  
old bones rattling in time.

At last their souls are free  
to glow in Texas moonlight  
raise prayer shawls in celebration  
of warm breezes...and freedom.

**Dede Fox**  
**Houston, TX**

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## **Icy Aspect**

The cat still sleeps on my side of the bed  
though the other half is vacant.  
We spoon, warming each other.  
Barren nights have become longer.  
The sun has deserted us  
leaving darkness, bitter weather.  
The grass is brown,  
the hyacinth slumbers,  
we purr together and wait.

**Adamarie Fuller**  
**Houston, TX**

## **After Ecclesiastes**

—*vanity of vanities! all is vanity.*

Ecclesiastes 9

I sit in my garden listening  
to the mourning doves, mockingbirds, cardinals  
Better is the call of mating birds in springtime  
than the noise of television and a striving after wind  
Better the doves cooing from treetops  
though they pass like a shadow  
for who can tell what will be after them under the sun  
Vanity of vanities, behold all is vanity  
Computers will be forgotten

There will be no remembrance of  
cell phones, radios, automobiles  
TV pundits are dust, political candidates are wind  
He who loves fame will not be satisfied with fame  
This also is vanity  
There will be no remembrance of celebrities  
None will remember names scratched in sand



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Better is the end of a thing than its beginning  
if there be endings and beginnings  
for every ending is a beginning  
Who knows what wonders will follow  
when the sun expires into darkness  
Wonder upon wonder, each vanishes in its time

Even now, this moment of soft breeze  
bird calls, a distant siren, the sun going down  
vanity of vanities, my beating heart  
the flickering light in the trees

**Christine Gilbert**  
Austin, Tx

### **From Book 1, The Parliament of Poets: An Epic Poem**

Poem 1:

In the mid part of the moon, I stood,  
in the midst of the Sea of Tranquility,  
looking around me from rim to curving rim,  
the brilliant moonscape against the blackest  
black of space, stark blackness, polarities  
of light and night, where a human footprint  
marked a giant leap forward for mankind,  
in lunar dust, footsteps still all about,  
undisturbed, untouched by decades of time,  
destined to remain for all time, eternity,  
or as near to it as we can imagine,  
unlike what Robinson Crusoe found,  
an ephemeral foot print on a beach,  
here with instruments and a flag half unfurled  
in the solar wind, half a lunar module,  
the descent platform left far behind,  
the glory of the moon of all creation.

---

And then I saw him sitting upon his nag,  
Rocinante, Don Quixote, a lance resting  
across his saddle, as he leaned forward,  
from next to a crater, gazing my way.  
At first, shock overtook me, finding myself  
where I was, disoriented, disbelieving,  
how could it be? I stood there without  
an encumbering spacesuit, lightly clad,  
in my old corduroy jacket, worn beyond  
its prime, breathing in the atmosphere of the moon.  
The Man of La Mancha plodded slowly on his nag,  
even as I began to realize we were  
not alone. A crowd of poets were coming  
toward me, too. How could they have gotten  
here as well, I wondered....

**Frederick Glaysher**  
**Rochester, MI**

### **Leaving**

The tree outside my window  
grows bright with leaves made frail  
by age and season,  
each poised in poignant glory  
for its time to fall.  
Most let go in solitary stillness,  
drifting unresisting  
to return to dust below.  
But some! Oh, some cling fiercely,  
waiting for a hearty gust,  
a burst of vibrant force  
to set them free.  
No gentle glide to ground for these –  
they dance before they die.

**Amy L. Greenspan**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **The Buddah Frog**

Contemplating the rain  
he is unconcerned  
as I contemplate him.

It is a mixture  
of pomp and circumstance  
as I admire his camouflage  
useless in the entryway.

I call my wife quietly  
as she combs her hair  
as she guides her lipstick  
another form of camouflage

for the workday ahead.  
The frog jumps  
once, twice into the hedges  
having learned  
all it needed of  
liquid language.

It was a beautiful sight  
the light rain  
the frog on the pavement  
as I hop once, twice  
into the hedges of my mind.

**Mike Gullickson**  
**Georgetown, TX**

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## These Were the Frequently Asked Questions

How long do I have?  
Only as long as the last breath  
it's different for everyone  
when it's time you'll know

What is it like to die?  
The possibilities are limitless  
allow your mind to accept what comes  
maybe it comes to this—  
Someone calling your name  
an awareness of incandescence surrounding you  
an intimate glimpse of holiness  
long after the miracle of sleep eludes you

Why does God allow me to suffer?  
He doesn't, you do  
but trust this, Autumn will arrive  
remember the promises of childhood  
nothing as changed

Fish the stream of consciousness  
catch rainbow trout with your bare hands  
feel the fear of the unknown swim away  
as you release it, see how the stream flows on

It's raining now, droplets splatter the surface  
joining others, becoming a part  
of something bigger  
in the end  
it's like that

**Joyce Gullickson**  
**Georgetown, TX**

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## **No Way Back**

A very clever plan indeed, if I may be so bold.  
I marked the trail with pumpkin seed  
in order that the route of my return  
would lead directly to that stump of wood.  
And there for all the world to see would rest  
the prize, the Holy Grail of which you've heard  
me often speak. And if you pass the test  
this prize will be your own, upon my word.  
Just pull the sword from out yon log and to  
yourself will now accrue such awesome power  
as known to few. But be forewarned, the  
sweetest fruit may yet turn sour. And  
unlike Damocles, who begged relief  
from 'neath that lone horse hair,  
this prize, once gained, is ever won,  
and you can't get here from there.

**John Hoag**  
**Dripping Springs, TX**

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## **Dried Apples**

For a couple of days in October,  
Mama sliced our apples into thin wedges  
with a sharp paring knife,  
she then spread'm out to shrivel in the sun  
on top of the tin roof barn.

While there, the dogs and cats  
kept the rats away from over the rafters,  
and crows pretty much stuck to the swamp.

It took some three more days  
for the apples to get good and ready,  
but when the slices were dry,  
she put'm all inside empty lard buckets  
to keep them cool in the springhouse.

Over the winter months we would pull out a fistful,  
place'm 'round a circle in the cast iron skillet,  
cover'm with cinnamon powder and molasses,  
and bake'm inside the pot belly  
of the old wood stove.

To this day, I still love baked apples and molasses.  
And to this day, I still love to think about Mama  
slicing apples to scatter on the tin roof.

**Glynn M. Irby**  
**Clute, TX**

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## Coyote

Coyote might have gone  
the way of buffalo or beaver  
but he learned to smell strychnine  
in the snares, taught himself not to eat  
the trappers' tainted meat.

Shifting his boundaries  
he followed bulldozers  
east through razed woodlands  
skulking into clearings  
foraging up-turned earth  
for insect eggs and baby mice until  
he turned up on a truck farm in New Jersey  
gulping down blackberries, stripping  
savory bushes till his chin ran red.

Now he ranges around Boston  
Pensacola and Poughkeepsie,  
lured into a maze of safe sidewalks  
by the pull of painted T-shirts  
carved fetishes of thread-wrapped stone.

People should consider who they conjure:  
dung-eater, prophet-with-no-honor,  
liar, iconoclast, thief...

Trickster Coyote, casting moon shadows  
haunting suburban hedges  
beating the odds.

**Christine Irving**  
**Denton, TX**

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## **Left or Taken**

Is it more terrible to be the one taken,  
or the one left behind?  
When catastrophe screams across  
an ordinary path, rips a person  
out of this dimension,  
spits him into the next,  
violently ends a human life,  
is the greater sorrow for the pain and fright of  
that individual, or for the loved one left behind,  
who will forever look into  
days and nights with empty eyes, as  
memories march forever into the past,  
gone the touch, the embrace, the smile,  
the voice, the routine of daily life.  
What needle and thread can mend such a tear,  
a gaping hole in the life of the one left behind.

**Rosemarie Horwath Iwasa**  
Garfield Heights, OH



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## **Diamond Hoe Down**

The man doesn't dance,  
won't say why not;  
he hikes sure-footed as goat,  
his stamina boundless;  
music addict, he takes his fix  
sitting perfectly still —  
no tapping of toes,  
no snapping fingers;  
never a shuffle while walking  
nor spontaneous spin of glee.  
But: In the yard I've watched  
how he swings the diamond hoe —  
confidence, affection apparent  
in firm grip, graceful sweeps;  
deftly, the two in tandem,  
slice out weeds, trench for seeds;  
eyes following diamond blade,  
lost in his element, rapt bliss;  
no question who's leading,  
no danger of mis-handling.  
Today I borrowed that hoe,  
set to skimming away packed earth;  
noticed the easy coupling,  
smiled into the rhythm  
as hoe touched down, and I knew:  
This is his dance!

**Jazz Jaeschke**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Once Had**

I once was young, and had my strength.  
I woke up rested. Of course I knew  
someday it might run away, like a dog  
slipping out the gate, but I never guessed  
it would feel this halt. And the props  
I counted on—smarts, hope, friends,  
nature, art—I can see they are  
impermanent. Yet still I want this  
body, all it manages without my bid,  
muscles which try to respond, hunger  
which comes and is appeased, tears  
that burn and somehow clear memory.  
I want to be inside here, and I even dare  
to consider sharing it, trusting her to  
step around my debris as I grant her  
respect for her own jury-rigs.  
Older women know how to go on  
and hand out love like biscuits, tuck  
this in your pocket for tomorrow.

**Maggie Jochild**

**Austin, TX**

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## **Man Hands**

Uncle Len lived in a pair of striped bib over-alls, way out in the country, past our house, past the Raveno, past Salm's egg farm. The Haber place was way out there, and way out there I went, in the back seat of mom's Ford Galaxy 500, window open, arm out surfing in the wind through fields of corn. The emerald ears and leaves trembled in the hot breeze. The fields breathed, a dancing mass of reptiles standing on end, squeezed into square pens.

I found Uncle Len in the barn under a cow his pail filled; he shot milk into the farm cat's mouth five feet away. At our supper, I watch his hands spread apple butter on a heel of homemade bread. Hands like antique furniture, each day's new nicks and cuts filled in and outlined by grease and grit, buffed and burnished by a hard days work.

Uncle Len led me out back with his WWII machete from the Philippines, used it to pry a pile of sleeping snakes from under the porch. He severed the heads of those too slow to twist off into the grass, heaped their bodies into a clump of corkscrewing tentacles. His hands held a dead one for me.

On the long ride home, through quiet fields dark and dead, I thought of those hands around a cow's udder squeezing milk, around a snake's neck squeezing breath, and I thought of cornfields breathing in a hot summer breeze.

**Geo Kiesow**  
**Milwaukee, WI**

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## Risen

why can I not touch these three weeks when my life was swallowed  
with the mathematical expectation of her death  
why can't I write about sponging water on her mouth  
the nurse, rude in the final moments of decay  
the last days when I couldn't, wouldn't see her  
the long minutes waiting for morphine  
the lipstick and curled hair her body had not seen in so long  
so long

her accountant husband rushing the funeral so it would be on their  
sixtieth wedding anniversary

the grandson you never knew  
who could not see why he should go to the graveside service  
or comb his blue hair.

Is my grief too raw to touch or did I bury it with you in the Pearl  
Cemetery amid oak trees, hills and sky, mercilessly absent of rain  
can I bury it here

can you come to me now

risen

and reassure me you did not struggle as you grasped for breath

reassure me it was okay to not watch you die

that it was okay to dread visiting you (the odor of bleach, urine, feces)

that it is okay to make love

to cease mourning

to cease looking back

**Elizabeth Kropf**

**Leander, TX**

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## **Istanbul**

I walk the cobblestone streets of Istanbul—  
watching bazaar vendors arrange stalls  
with mounds of curry, red paprika, cinnamon bark,  
dried figs, dates and green, brown, black olives  
shimmering with brine.

A carpet salesman invites me, a total stranger,  
for tea and friendship before his sales pitch begins.  
Bobbing heads, covered in bright scarves, sashay by,  
stopping to pinch eggplants and tomatoes,  
while choosing lamb shanks or chickpeas.  
Hard-hitting carpet haggling begins,  
my tiny teacup filled for the tenth time,  
the scent of fresh mint lingering in the air,  
as if to feast on the bargaining breath.

Empty handed, I hit the street, where men sit at shoeshine stands,  
their fine pointed leather shoes resting on golden molds,  
eyes roving in their heads at passing women,  
scantly dressed foreign women catching more eyes.

I pass a coffeehouse where old men gather—  
smoking, drinking, talking,  
smoking, drinking, talking—all day.

Tired of walking, I rest at an open café  
hidden in the long evening shadows of the Blue Mosque,  
with a bowl of warm lentil soup and yoghurt.

**Kathryn Lane**

**The Woodlands, TX**

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## **She Doesn't Get Out of the Airport Much**

Like the spinning of a reel  
she passes drinks to folks  
in a hurry  
waiting in artificial air.  
It's nearly a meditation.  
She pulls me in  
with a grin born of ranchers  
and lean cowboys. Points out  
The Salt Lick, sticky barbeque.  
Country cooking at the airport.  
My feet hurt, my bags are heavy.  
She comes by with a few beers  
dances the two step to the airport speakers.  
The live band tunes up. Texas Country.  
Smiles all round.  
Boarding calls & the TSA grow faint.  
The music comes alive. We could be  
at home on the range.  
Strangers sit together, their invisibility  
jackets resting forgotten  
on chair rails.

**Becky Liestman**  
**Shorewood, MN**

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## **No Paper Hats**

He,  
He was sweet  
I didn't mind  
He was holiday ambrosia  
Or as still  
As a stem of dozy wine  
When he felt safe

We bunched in printed quilts  
And drew smiles on our foolishness

Eating olives wrapped in cheese,  
We laughed  
Burped our wine without decorum

And then the talk of going back  
To home—he said  
South-to-normalsville

### **NO PAPER HATS**

You can paint, he said  
And  
I will do hair in a garret by the lake  
Perhaps my mother will take notice  
And at long last  
Love me

**Jos Masonmazou,  
Austin, TX**

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## Harvest

Uncle Walter says it's been a good year  
and asks about the garden.

The western light is low and slanted  
illuminating the rooms with  
drowsy gold dust.

Newly picked tomatoes  
grace the dining table  
and cover the counters,  
a bounty of hearts blooming  
red and welcoming.

Gathered conversation is quiet,  
comfortable farewells are being said  
as if he were simply taking a trip out of town  
to return home next week,  
his eyes alert, smooth and peaceful  
as a still mountain lake at dawn.

For now, the promise of harvest conceals sorrow.  
He comments tomatoes are best savored  
when left to be nurtured long by the vine,  
vibrant and sweet when allowed their due time.

Outside there are more,  
ripened to perfection,  
waiting in baskets on the door steps.

**Darla McBryde**  
**Spring, TX**



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## Open Mic @ Ruta Maya

a cavern / warehouse /  
badly lighted / garage doors / cigar stores  
ample stage unswept /  
mic-stands like soldiers stand headless on end /  
bar gal reading book / bar gal swamped with requests /  
bar gal shouts warning  
at single thespian trying out his part /  
he loudly proclaiming angst of some sorts /  
hogging the stage / impervious to others /  
children yelling—running hither and fro in endless chases /  
shawl-robed men seeking drinks and time on stage /  
reading whole chapters from books /  
later removed by staff for offending someone /  
great poets speaking heartfelt words /  
ignored by the screen lighted faces of the laptop dancers /  
a cacophony of noises /  
energy increases as the clock moves toward nine /  
musicians line up and go / upstairs but not on time /  
lists are made of ten minutes each and all /  
they sit and stare or just wander out  
and tolerate time awaiting the call /  
sometimes a voice cracks the air  
commanding a spot light focus with great power of purpose-profundity or practice /  
suddenly the room turns  
around and takes notice /  
a fire squad of truisms are fired around the room /  
there is no refuting or correction /  
great talents rise above the chaos / a democracy produces

**Jack McCabe**  
Austin, TX

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## Long Enough

They meet for mocha lattes at a suburban café  
on Saturday morning after a late night FaceBook reunion.  
Barely recognizing each other, eager to make up  
for lost time, hard years and long distance,  
sipping from sturdy white cups, they skip the household years  
of baby showers, public school programs, senior proms...  
rush their words to get to the heart of the matter at hand:  
midlife marital trouble, serious—both of them.  
Sizing up each other's secrets, they (try not to) tell  
everything in hard stories that get easier  
to exaggerate with chocolated caffeine,  
so they each have another cup and talk  
long enough that confessions become complaints,  
and embarrassment burns their recently lifted faces;  
long enough that the Musak version of the top ten songs  
they sang together as teenagers becomes a soundtrack  
for a film about a pair of forty-something old friends  
who meet for coffee and find their own troubles  
better company than those they left behind.  
Saying goodbye and promising to message,  
they drive home remembering why they fell in love  
with their cold cereal husbands, those amazing men  
they each decide to invite out for breakfast next weekend,  
right after they check their tattered high school yearbook  
to see how much their aging friend has changed.

**Anne McCradey**  
**Henderson, TX**

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## **Cat Woman's Next Life**

Two days after Christmas,  
she borrowed ten dollars  
from her father for gas  
and a pack of cigarettes  
then disappeared  
well into the new year.

Heartbroken phone calls  
and drunken midnight prowlers  
keening at the door revealed  
she had gone back to him. Again.  
Just a memory now, merci mon dieu,  
though it pains us to revisit.

We look past her alley cat character,  
beneath the façade  
of the artful dodger,  
believing we might heal  
the wounded wings  
of an angel who has fallen often.

Next Christmas I will  
polish the silver globe ornament,  
fill it with catnip sachet,  
hang it on the tree and pray  
it will keep her entertained  
enough to stay.

**Stazja McFadyen**  
**Cedar Park, TX**

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## **Solace of the Sea**

Waves rush to enfold a forlorn frame  
Soft breezes brush her hair in gentle strokes  
Rays of sunlight peep through random cloud  
Seagull silhouettes traverse in tandem quest.

Alone she dangles by a thread of reason  
Ocean mirth drowns medley of complaints  
She has no quarrel with the sea, its span of  
possibility, its lullaby a natural drug redress.

Flurry of regrets descend, severe and somber  
with the wind, belie her broken trust in fickle  
friend, seat dark and deeply permeate thick  
mist, agitate with slightest twist of glee.

Tears tickle tender cheeks, trickle salty,  
bittersweet to fall on shifting sands beneath  
her feet, where tides discreetly gather bits  
of liquid gloom, retreat into tranquility.

**Kathleen McRae**  
Newark, TX

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## **A Pantoum to Chase Your Gloom**

Austin is as open as its mics  
Anthologies at midnight bloom  
Music and rhyme will fill your nights  
Good and bad there's always room  
Anthologies at midnight bloom  
From budding poets far and near  
Good and bad there's always room  
And sometimes others come to hear  
From budding poets far and near  
There is support for kith and kin  
And sometimes others come to hear  
And warmly they are welcomed in  
If you by luck should find this town  
Music and rhyme will fill your nights  
You'll give up what's got you down  
Austin is as open as its mics

**Neil Meili**

**Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, Canada**

## **The Land of the Shining Souls**

Excitement and joy bubble up  
Life happens in an instant  
The surface resistant to sadness  
Feelings coursing through veins  
Adventure awaits  
The sunshine calls  
The words come  
Speaking them unblocks the creativity  
And words flow once again  
Can't wait  
The air is pure electricity  
Charged with creativity and love  
Creative juices flow and are boundless  
In the land of the shining Souls

**Sharon Meixsell**  
**Edmonds, WA**

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## **Mirror Shock**

So now my name is crone:  
wise, wizened, wondering how  
the present has betrayed me.

Sandpaper skin and scars  
linger from self-sculpting  
a life and forging a soul.

Relentless silver sprouts from  
my crown, the treasure of  
the survivor that ends in the  
borrowed youth of dyed curls.

At last my hand and heart  
steady, my stride confident,  
my mind keen, a little child  
— the future— beckons  
and I smile and reach out  
to cradle her in my arms.

Behind me a blaze of candles  
sheds white tears of tallow.

**Nancy Membrez**  
**San Antonio, TX**

## **On the Far Edge**

somewhere in georgia  
(i could locate a triple-a road map  
but by this time tomorrow  
the official real-time coordinates  
would escape my supra-perfect memory)  
within the certified boundaries  
of this red-dirt-part-of-a-whole

---

is the state of mind  
i would select  
had i any power over perpetuity  
how this designation came about  
is either second-nature  
or impossible to grasp  
depending on your own perception  
of paradise eden heaven nirvana  
it was there i could embark on two naked feet  
having left my steaming sneakers on the warm gray  
front steps of my soft-spoken grandmother's  
broad wooden porch to light out past the neighbors  
down the buckling grass-stuck rain-cooled sidewalk  
beyond the piggly wiggly to the courthouse corner  
where it was just as inviting to choose left as right  
meander toward the pharmacy and beauty parlor  
or the matinee posters at the fifty-cent movie theater  
to visit grandpa's local hardware off the beaten path  
ending up in the dime store for the annual summer  
blow-your-own-plastic-balloon-globs-on-a-straw  
purchase saving nickels for a raspberry push-up  
all gone but the last melting bites upon return arrival  
in their backyard swings near the grapevine arbors  
by the tantalizing tool shed on the end of the sand  
and pebble driveway next to the aromatic kumquat  
tree where two of us just my older brother and me  
knew somehow instinctively that  
we f l i c k e r e d then on the far edge  
of the unexplored universe  
or the elysian fields and  
as close to home as a human of any age ever gets

**Judith Austin Mills**  
**Pflugerville, TX**

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## **1,000 Burdens**

I feel the heaviness of a thousand of your burdens  
I carry my own as a vest of regrets  
the world seems lighter when we share the weight  
the words flow over your lips like the summer monsoons  
each word illicit healing and each sentence removes the pebbles of  
hardness  
the burdens break down the walls of simultaneous memories  
of painful moments and doubts filled with shame  
but I know know your love burdens my heart with joy  
and I accept those burdens 1,000 times over

**Babs Mittleman**  
**San Antonio, TX**

## **Folk Art**

Everflowering Tree on brown bark paper  
Brought to life by Rubio, Nahatl Indian,  
Living in a hut in the state of Guerrero.  
Exquisite flowers in day glow temperas  
Cover the branches, round blue flowers,  
Red-orange in their centers.  
Odd, oval shaped fruit  
Hangs from the long stems (maybe food  
For the exotic birds and animals that live  
in and around the Tree).

There is more to this Tree  
With strange birds with long flowering tails.  
The blue deer, the cross-eyed ocelot,  
Than meets the "White Man's" eye.  
There is some great Cosmic confrontation,  
Some classic struggles for souls.

Something is there, in that Tree,  
Devine and Revolutionary,  
That only Gods and Indians could know.

**Herman Nelson**  
**Austin, TX**



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## Between the Question and the Answer

He does not hear her answer.  
He asked if he could move in,  
if he might be helpful.

She waters the yard,  
the lime tree and grapevine  
planted before Easter.  
His own yard a stubble  
of wheat. At 70, sober  
now 13 years, he can't remember  
when the green faded  
and the walls began to chip.  
Rains brought mold and he  
looked the other way.  
But he remembers her  
playing on the fresh cut lawn  
beneath the mesquites.

How to work out the details,  
she thinks, make everyone  
happy under one roof?

She considers what follows  
with a yes. Becoming a daughter  
full time. Memory weeds,  
an infestation. His dependence  
fertilized, the overgrowth  
crowding her seedlings, she  
fought for peace.

He considers if he should ask again.

**Brenda Nettles**  
**Harlingen, TX**

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## **The Rabbit Hole**

Sometimes I have nightmares I'm still there,  
Wearily running through a haze of confusion  
Adorned in colorful flowers and poetic analogies,  
Coughing from the fumes of forgetfulness  
As I struggle to remember who I am and why I must leave.  
Yet she finds me again and again  
The innocent girl naively believing  
That the Queen of Hearts should have one  
Yet hysterical hilarity ensues in a ravenous rage  
Shrieking, "Off with their heads!"  
Cackling, "Aren't you a strange little thing?"  
Weeping, "Why would you wish to leave me?"  
Manic majesty reigning over her wicked wonderland.  
Then suddenly I've become her  
Begging the next child who happened down the rabbit hole to stay  
Was she once a girl?  
Did she once have a name?  
Or was she always painting her world  
To match the hues of her delusions?  
Will the next child be mine?  
Will she stumble down into the nonsense  
Because I didn't keep a better eye  
Or because I didn't want to be here alone  
In this world of nonsense and neglect?  
When I stare into the looking glass next  
Is it her I will see or the queen or myself?  
Do I even know the difference anymore?

**Shae O'Brien**

**Manor, TX**

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## **Old Oaks Routine**

At dawn, raindrops rose from the base of oaks.  
Margarita's voices came strong to me,  
like the distant echoes of slitdrums and conga.

The oaks, rooted in time, whistled as one.  
She sang; that beautiful beast of burden, named after  
that hard mix of lime juice and more, sang to me.

She sang again. The sweet melody  
of Kru women in worship, backed by hidden sampkas.  
The oaks listened, I listened.

The Bentley, that wind in four wheels, roofless in the  
familiar sun, fleets me out of Wimberley,  
down Oak Hill, where more wheels wait for green.

Heads turn to see the markings –  
the sacred passage for potent potions, made  
by blade, in blood and tears.

At night, before the crescent moon harvested the stars,  
Margarita's voice returned to me,  
like the unheard voices of Kru kids at dawn.

**Timothy Ogene**  
**Wimberley, TX**

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## **The Last Weekend in Wasted Time**

An early spring rain graces the sleeping—  
fledglings, seedlings, stars, the old man, snoring,  
his body curled like a young fern by mine.

It's Saturday, a week before daylight  
abdicates; the last days before dark dawns,  
work hours beginning before breakfast.

How flurries of time swirl when imagining  
our passing or change, like a watery globe,  
salt-summer and snow captured in glass.

We stir, watch the birds budding on a branch  
knocking off first peach blossoms in their dance,  
fresh light shattering through our window.

**Katherine Durham Oldmixon**

**Austin, TX**

## **And We Marry**

Sometimes we marry to escape ourselves,  
the self that is petty and thieving and still  
ashamed of the requisite sea foam green  
tutu from a botched dance recital in third  
grade. We flee the downcast eyes, the subtly  
bruised palms of a lifetime of self-protective  
encounters. We marry thinking the other  
is somehow better, more than all the selves  
we could ever dream up. But maybe that's  
not so criminal, so foreign—this notion.

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However, just as often we attach only to sever  
the very joints meant for clinging. We silence  
the part that weeps at injustice (of any kind),  
the part that, just this morning, stopped short  
of sending a thank you note to Mister Coppola,  
the winemaker who most likely stained all ten  
of his toes in honor of last night's dinner party.  
Oh, what folly. There is nothing the other can  
give us. Nothing. And yet, we open our greedy  
mouths and anticipate the filling. I bet we've  
all been known to wait months for a kind word,  
or, perhaps, a decently packed picnic lunch.  
We marry because we have hope (or are in want of it).  
And each time we stand before our invited audience  
and earnestly pledge, both publicly and privately,  
to be kind, honorable and, most of all, reasonably  
obedient to this new beloved of ours. But we rarely are.  
Instead, we are ourselves. And we marry anyway.

**Jenna Opperman**  
Austin, TX

### **One Stinking Hug**

You reach your long arms out to me,  
hug me tightly,  
but immediately dump me.  
You are then brazen enough to go right next door  
and hug the trash there.  
But that's okay;  
you stink anyway.

**Elneta Owens**  
Austin, TX

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## **No Turning Back**

Like a scene from Tolkien  
The woods presented themselves before us  
An endless stretch of beaten path through an essence of green mist  
The up the down the back the forth  
Zoning in on mile seven of nine  
Greenness pervaded my very being,  
sounds of flowing water ahead and behind  
Endless entwining rugged roots provided steps and stairs  
and nature's invitation to walk its beauty  
A thousand more photographic opportunities we walked on past  
determined to finish what we started  
And I, in my zone, imagined Orpheus as the sound of your breath  
dissipated behind me  
Were you still there, on the path, behind me, with me  
I knew the answer without looking back,  
And I continued forward

**Jim Parker**  
Austin, TX

## **Texture**

Through the coffee-house window  
she spies him out on the street  
innocently unlocking his bicycle,  
slim young body, face as smooth  
and calm as milk in a tall glass,  
brushing a lock of long dark hair  
behind an ear.  
He is unaware her whole  
body longs to run out  
into the street, touch his face,  
and smile at him,  
then without a word,  
return to her group of friends,  
drink the last of her coffee, and go home.

**Laura Pena**  
Katy, TX

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## **Riffing on Yoga**

Sukhasana  
Cross-legged seated position  
Good for meditation  
Right foot tucked up against one's center  
Left foot nestled in front of the right  
Thighs rest on the floor  
Our instructor is at peace  
Her body holds this pose  
And so I sit  
And glance at mirrored walls  
And see—  
A panda waiting for the zoo keeper to bring  
Some tender bamboo shoots for lunch  
Thighs are nowhere near the floor  
Centers caught in my underwear  
Muscles, sinews, bones  
Legs and buttocks scream—  
I'm vibrating  
A sound leaves my body  
I'm not sure where it comes from  
The woman next to me looks scared  
Hold and breathe  
Hold and breathe  
Hold breath  
A bell releases us

**Oscar C. Pena**  
**Kingsville, TX**

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## **Just Let It Happen**

If you want to find the Buddha, touch a lover's arm.  
If you want to see Heaven, walk any tree-lined path.  
There is no great secret to unravel,  
no mountain to climb, no guru to consult.

The Universe really wants to keep it simple.  
It's been showing you where you're going all  
your life; in the warmth of the morning sun, the  
grass cooling your feet, the earth that you call home.

Nothing says you have to build a fortune, raise  
an edifice. Win the race and you are crowned, lose  
the race and you are cherished. It's easy to be  
loved: all you have to do is let it happen.

**Pluto**

**Austin, TX**

## **Thoughts of a Deist**

Sometimes seeing the mess the world is in,  
it seems like God quit early and has been hiding out ever since, be-  
hind one of his mountains and hills.  
Out of reach, sight  
One can only hope.....not.

**Mary Riley**

**Austin, TX**



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## **Desert Life**

After the coldest night,  
she warms your chest.  
After the hottest day,  
she cools your forehead;  
but she also steals the blanket of mist  
from around your lungs.  
Twilight turns the foothills pink  
and the few trees are distant seeds.  
A place of spells,  
stark blue skies  
and the whitest light.  
Too much clarity  
and too little kindness.  
The sun will burn a hole in your eyes.

**Susan Rogers**  
**Georgetown, TX**

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## **Impermanent**

Those whispers that were present  
and fell like feathers onto the bed  
we should never have laid in together  
wept their own secrets onto sheets  
of minimum thread.

Restricted totally by the binds we  
roped round the sounds our mouths made  
to halt longings that were not meant to be uttered  
we held back just enough  
so those lives we couldn't have lived forever  
didn't intrude on this impermanent  
heaven of never.

And had you bothered asking for honesty  
I would have answered honestly  
that truth is not my forte.

So should you lay with me  
know that when you submit  
it is to a small offering -  
where the tumult of bodies  
in the tangle of sheets  
and those constant reminders to breathe  
are all you're going to get.

Whatever is hidden  
remains so for a reason  
and it's not for either of us to dig  
just know we can never trade  
this piece of small  
for something big.

**Candy Royalle**  
**Tamarama, Australia**

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## **Where Once We Played**

Dreams of Childhood years  
Ripple memories  
Like a Spider's web  
Spun with wonder  
O how those swings  
Tied on low branches quivered  
In the courtyard  
We sang monsoon songs  
While henna ran from our hands  
We Swung in smooth curves  
Until darkness circled our feet  
A playful moon rose slowly  
Swinging with us  
Up and down, high and low  
Shadows turned purple  
Frogs croaked in puddles  
The loud racket of crickets  
Made us nervous  
We ran home  
Our anklets jingled  
Like melodies  
From years gone by  
The swings we climbed  
Now fragile  
As our aging bones

**Shubh Bala Schiesser**

**Austin, TX**

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## **Mother's Wedding Dress**

Her four-year-old eyes shone brightly as she studied her image in the mirror,  
her small form nearly lost in the organza folds of her mother's wedding dress.

What she found there was the dream of being a beautiful bride someday,  
attired in white fluff sprinkled with lace and pearls.

The magic of the gown transformed her, despite its enormity.

She is unaware that this fairy tale dress  
is the symbolic doorway leading from a self-centered life  
to a life of responsibility and maturity  
that she cannot even imagine,  
though her own life is made safe and stable  
by the journey her mother began while wearing this same gown  
as she committed her life to a partnership with her father.

Let her enjoy the romance of lace and pearls, even revel in it.  
The implications will be revealed to her  
when she is ready to know them.

**Smiling Jane (Jane Steig Parsons)**

**Austin, TX**

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## **Lilacs Folded**

Children of the sun  
play in lilacs  
blown through golden  
pages folded  
clean and clear,  
take up silences  
night would covet,  
blanket coliseums  
sporting  
screams and howls  
legion disguises  
as human.  
We origami these  
unforgiving parodies  
the Piper trills for,  
rats and vermin biting  
at his heels,  
and one is labeled  
rouser of rabble,  
subversive,  
poet.

**Rod C. Stryker**  
**San Antonio, TX**

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## Poetry Workshop Results in Flagrant Acts of Vandalism

When one workshop instructor  
Invites the gathered poets  
To chalk verse all over Austin,  
She didn't have to ask twice:  
We like children take the chunks of colored calcite  
And scribble poetic imagery like graffiti  
On bus stop shelters and concrete park benches,  
And on the wooden walls of sidewalk sheds  
That surround noisy construction sites downtown,  
Besides on cement walkways every where we went.  
Some writers frame the lines underfoot  
With borders like embroidery  
Then hopscotch across the streets,  
Jumping from haiku to cinquain.

But this day of poetry slips past us  
In a pastel trickle of letters  
That drip into gutters  
When a midday shower washes them away.  
Perhaps our spontaneous poems  
Have risen with steam to be reprinted  
In the rainbows that arch the sky.

**Lillian Susan Thomas**  
**Tulsa, OK**

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## **Ash Wednesday**

Wearing a black veil  
with a solid gray dress  
down to the floor  
Her eyes  
wide-open dark  
twinkle deeply  
Her eyebrows  
strong yet graceful  
arched upward  
A proud iron will  
She rejects  
the cross of Ash Wednesday  
Broods over smoke  
from cigarette passes  
from between her fingers  
up into her lips  
Against her bosom  
a mink's fur hardens  
Her branding iron  
But  
there is the man  
the doctor on the train  
the key to  
el libro negro

**Steve Vera**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **'Hey Winds'**

Fly me along as I want to rattle that empty cola can too,  
because I want to race past that suspended crisp piece of paper,  
and I want to see that smile as she pulls back her hair,  
so fly me with you, faster than ever, in your top gear!

Take me to those crossroads where you meet your kin,  
because I want to hear the gossips about the passing crowd,  
and then rise up the skyscrapers creating that eerie sound,  
so high to mix in the clouds and then nowhere to be found.

Push me farther coz I want to race against a pair of wings,  
And I want to be fearless of crossing any boundaries,  
And then I wish to sway over those bare cornfields,  
As they pierce through me, when I've no swords, no shields.

Wake me up early tomorrow because I want to ring those thick church bells,  
And then on my way back down, blow off the old man's hat,  
And then I want to turn the notebook pages of the person writing me,  
So much so that he leaves his pen, feels and starts admiring me.

Fly me away right through the leaves because I love their giggles,  
And then I want to enter the backyard to tease the wind chimes,  
As they hit each other, managing somehow a few vivid rhymes,  
So bring me back here, you wanderer, bring me back a thousand times.

Take me high because I want to do some tricks up there in the sky,  
I want to make some rain and get soaked in it and then dive back on grass,  
Its time to halt, let me breathe as you mingle with dust,  
But fly me along in a moment to heights, because its you, dear Winds,  
whom I trust.

**Vaibhav Wadhwa**  
**Faridabad, India**



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## **Two-in-the-Morning Train**

August has burned the day to cinders,  
and I sit in the dark  
on a worn wicker chair,  
eyes trying to part the dark  
and see across five miles of forest,  
past highways to the distant tracks  
that carry a two-in-the-morning train.

But it might as well be a ghost white  
puff of smoke,  
a phantom coyote's howl  
or Texas stars lost across the Red.  
It might as well be the pitch of night  
before never open eyes.

That train's leaving Oklahoma now,  
a fading echo in the ears  
of fox and bobcat  
prowling beneath a new black moon.  
It won't be very long  
before it's gone the way of dragons,  
before it moves into another midnight  
and the myth of Dakota Buffalo;  
gone, simply gone  
leaving only rusted rails and tracks.

**Ron Wallace**  
**Durant, OK**

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## Why an Old Man Smokes at Night

I offer myself another cigarette, though the Bogart gesture goes un-  
noticed,  
forgotten  
after a moment,  
like a watered down drink  
left standing  
when standing without  
an old lover in a new bar.

Forgotten  
like the passing of loose jointed seasons,  
the hot ash summer dropped by a cool Autumn  
exhaling winter  
through a filter of menthol spring.

As forgotten as smoke  
whistled in a whisper through the window  
as it drifts away beyond the screen  
to some other cliché place under the sun.

And,  
should dawn ever decide to rise again  
from the smoky horizon, I will still be sitting  
on the side of our empty bed  
with another cigarette lit,  
with its glow lost behind the shades  
that shadow the night

like the years that have shadowed me  
with their rolled and burnt out  
butted memories.

**Akeith Walters**  
**Boerne, TX**

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## Simple

there were days I could not breathe.  
like the dreams, they left me frozen—  
waiting for a home that is not sealed inside a kiss.

I put a flower inside a soda bottle,  
filled it with water and placed it inside the window.  
it still burns like the day I bought it.

water can make anything grow.  
make anything breathe, even for a moment  
as it warms my hands; the ice cleansed away.

such are the simple things.

**Weasel**

**Manvel, TX**

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## **An Intoxicating Couple**

The invisible kiss  
of kumquat martinis

has generated  
harmonic whispers

near the buzzy rosemary  
at the deck's edge

The insatiable gift  
of sandy sandals

cannot scuttle the kick  
of jalapeno margaritas

or the smoky roast  
of love's hot hiss.  
The lake and sky

cluster in a perfect  
indigo interlude,

as the staccato tick  
of erotic midnight

clocks excited progress.

**Scott Wiggerman**  
Austin, TX

## **engendered**

sublimated or spiritualized  
sexualized intimacy  
what are we at  
in the drive  
to be fully seen—  
naked & engaged  
vulnerable & empowered  
at once & a part & a'mazed

**Ric Williams**  
Austin, TX

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## **Cranberry Harvest**

Once, in our six years, we harvested cranberries,  
corralled crimson beaded water that wrapped  
around our waists like a ballet dancer helping us jump

Millions of these pink, yellow, scarlet beads  
hop, pop up and down. With wooden pushers  
as big as us, we rake them against the water in hoards,  
our sweat salts their juice. Some escape  
the calm, subtle lassoing, the uneven rake,  
but in the end, we win; they pull back, compliant  
We are cranberries bobbing under the fall sky  
Our tired muscles separate and divide  
the paths, the plan, these morsels of unplanned grief.  
Deep disguised red. Send them up the crisscross  
escalator and out of their flooded bog.

This marble fruit cut in half, has a clover shape  
I didn't expect. It's too late for surprises.  
Seeds fumble in my oversized hands.  
A crouched delicacy, a poisonless berry  
In the end, it was only us, in those rubber wader outfits  
standing in the water with nothing else to do,  
and the blush coloring gone.

**Liza Wolff-Francis**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Each Dawn I Die**

Each dawn I die over and over.  
I wake to find myself alive, lying in the fields of clover.  
Yesterday, I died not of a broken heart. The day before not of illness.  
With wine I fill my quart, and drink it till stillness.  
Each dawn I die when I close my eyes.  
No matter who's holding my hand, no matter where I stand.  
Each dawn I die when I remember why. I get cold and die. I hear her cry.  
Just as the sunlight hits the sky.

**Rene Xavier**

**Austin, TX**

## **Another Kind of Graveyard**

Once while driving home  
From a graveyard shift  
Tired and bewildered by life  
Much too fatigued to react  
With any sense of quickness or alertness  
I ran over a black and white kitten  
That darted out in front of me  
I pulled over  
Walked back to the mangled body  
Broken in so many places  
But despite all that metal  
All that weight  
All that gravity

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Despite all of Newton's laws  
And Darwin's theories  
The kitten cried  
It did not meow  
But rather it cried like a child might  
That had been broken in so many places and left to die  
I picked up the mangled creature  
And walked across the street to an inner city park  
Laid the poor kitten  
Still wailing in agony under the shade of a live oak  
Then with one swift movement  
I snapped its neck under the heel of my shoe  
I did so without looking  
Which was cowardly  
I turned away and stood there in the silence and death of it all  
I walked back to my car and drove the rest of the way home  
The next morning  
I noticed the blood on my sole  
I picked the shoes up and threw them one at a time  
Across the room  
Into the trash  
I have never told another living soul  
But I think of it often  
The poem is my confession  
The page my religion  
The noun the slain son  
The adjective the ghost  
The verb is God  
And I am just another sinner  
With blood on his hands

**Joaquin Zihuatanejo**  
**Denton, TX**

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## Poetry of 2012 Featured Poets

### **Ecclesiphobia**

So there's a word for it,  
an irrational fear of church.

Yet, as for me I suppose,  
it's less to do with the building  
and more with the followers  
who fill its padded pews.  
And yes, I was one of them  
for a good chunk of my life.

And yes, it's true that the solid  
religious citizen I was back then  
would be thoroughly disgusted  
with this old tequila-swiggin',  
poem-slingin' pagan I am now.

I'd feel grave concern for my soul.  
I'd pray for me—pray that God  
would save me from the liberal  
education that led me astray,

pray that I would not be  
a vile and scabrous influence  
on my unfortunate daughter,

and yes, pray the Holy Spirit  
would someday bring me back  
to the card-carryin', gun-wieldin',  
praise-his-name collective,

and I'd pray it in His name, because  
a god like this, must be a man.

**Nathan Brown**  
**Norman, OK**



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**canto para lorca (day of the dead pt.2)**

federico

how came you through fissured night  
framed in a nimbus of thorn your frail body  
a tilde of punctuated light your body thin  
as a bull's horn your name is four syllables  
vacating our breath gravating our mouths into nascent vowel  
an inchoate fish angled from our marrow

federico

how we remember your eyes: fraternal melancholies  
sad as the trains of seville *seville* where the bullet  
made for your skull was cast *seville* where all things death are  
incanted

*and somewhere in the desert a sirocco gathers the muezzins melisma  
and somewhere along the Guadalquivir a tree leans toward the strings  
of an oud*

*and somewhere in cuba a church murders for your grace  
and somewhere in 1936 a hand stabs you toward an agonizing white  
and from all places a shadow reaches toward spain*

look how the sirocco gathers into murderous cuban churches  
stringing the trees along the Guadalquivir until they sing with white  
agony

federico

i will not see your blood  
will not listen to your head  
will not know it plundered like a tomato  
opened like a courtyard in madrid  
conquered by the small angers that birthed this world

i will not hear the ghost turning in your thighs  
your thighs so much like those of a woman's i love  
I will not hear them speak of worms fluting your bones

**Regie Gibson**  
**Lexington, MA**

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## **Window to the Sky**

I sit  
feeding green grapes  
to a wild armadillo  
off the back patio  
of Ventana del Cielo  
The armadillo grubs along  
head down, pointy ears twitching  
ringed tail following along  
tiny heart beating in rhythm  
with the earth  
I can feel my heart beat here  
and it is good  
Two cardinals, male and female  
join me  
A red dragonfly arrives  
seeds of opportunity litter the ground  
sunlight dances across the page  
This moment is as it should be

**Joyce Gullickson**  
**Georgetown, TX**

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## **Spiraling into a Dream**

(Based on a painting by Merijane Chalmers )

With no regard to the constraints of reality  
drifting above the Earth  
watching the land masses below you  
continents of possibility  
islands of hope  
the sea a chance to float forever.

Scattered colors  
the way a soul is painted  
a corner missed  
some patchiness  
globes of gold  
that should have been spread

Spiraling into a dream  
a free fall of opportunity  
to be somewhere you have never been  
to be someone you might someday be  
entering the atmosphere  
you must learn to breathe.

Spiraling into a dream  
safe from the gravity of life

**Mike Gullickson**  
**Georgetown, TX**

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## Don't Stick on One Thing

How about them Astros?

Open your soul prayerfully  
listen to your dreams  
eat the whole box of Belgian truffles  
you bought at Sam's Club.

A white car comes around the corner  
*roulette*

a green truck.

Last summer it was webs everywhere  
maybe the yellow-and-black spiders in them  
were actually God  
surely last summer

was actually the universe.

Punch *SEEK* on the radio

a song of some sort will be there  
Piaf/Brazilian fusion, The Monkees, cantina music—  
maybe some dietary harangue.

What was it your dreams were telling you  
that you got up and turned into English muffins  
and coffeegrinder noise and Rex Morgan  
and toothpaste—still a little  
at one corner of your mouth—

and Spiderman and Doonesbury?

It's a disgrace to be reading Spiderman  
when the sun is always doing something new  
to the leaves, the twigs  
but such is the universe.

Your sock has a hole in its heel  
but you won't throw it away.

How about them Cubbies?

Ah, The Universe—in each of its cars one  
or more people

who might turn out to like you—is available for  
a limited time only.

It's very old.

There's a stream in it called The Perfume River  
Isn't that wonderful?

**John Gorman**  
Galveston, TX

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## **We Are All Related (Mitakuye Oyasin)**

If your skin is red  
They needed you dead  
But the message of your rising sun  
Has just begun.

If your skin is black  
They held you back  
But the message of your Negritude  
Is the 21st Century attitude

If your skin is brown  
They pinned you down  
But the message of your new Aztlan  
Is soon to come

If your skin is yellow  
They kept you below  
But the Zen of your yin and yang  
Spawns a new Big Bang

If your skin is white  
You've spread enough fright  
For all that's right, stop the fights  
Learn to love the Way of the Light

**Ken Jones**  
**Houston, TX**

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## **For Those Who Have Lost a Child**

may sorrow lead us into a new thought  
a birth no less horrific than mine  
may we live where bitterness doesn't deal all the cards  
where confusion soaks our very soul  
may we find in distorted illusion all colors as one  
may we find poignancy in death  
enlightenment in this life left  
may we still have dreams to interpret  
witnessing those we love fall to fate  
a final bell tolls on an endless mirage  
words helplessly take shape  
interpreting each situation after  
we hold matches  
breed fire as we languish in its light  
imperceptibly adjusting as days burn  
relinquishing control to attitude  
we are different, we are not  
packing tragedy moving his precious things  
may we take initiative to sleep  
messages come in dreams transitory Mecca  
metal deflects glass on tree  
actions have altered sublime context of reality  
strength won't allow for it  
these feelings of unrest  
subsumed by knowing and what we do  
rain comes  
gently weeping  
on the garden, on the lawn  
we take shelter  
under blankets in the cool air  
clearing minds  
for thoughts to grow there

**Jena Kirkpatrick**  
Austin, TX

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## Haiku

my cat stalks the moon  
crouched yearning by the window  
eyes reflecting gold

*Mi gato acecha a la luna  
agazapado, la anhela desde la ventana  
Sus ojos reflejan oro.*



cantaloupe slice moon  
floats low over sleeping earth  
melon in the sky

*La luna, rebanada decantalupo,  
flota baja sobre la tierra dormida  
melon en el cielo.*

**Sue Littleton**

**Buenos Aires, Argentina (Recoleta)**

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## **Mosquito**

Consider me the teeth of nature  
For I take little bites yet draw your blood  
Affirming that you are in fact  
A mammal on this globe, one of us  
The creatures that animate the earth

Consider me the itch  
You will forever scratch  
Seeking my secrets with awkward hands  
Grasping what you cannot hold

Consider that I annoy you because I can  
There is nothing you can do about it  
Try your sprays, your incense, your chemical warfare  
I simply continue to breed in the stagnant places

Consider me just beyond the tip of natures tongue  
Your usher into a cosmos that I understand with my being,  
That you explain with your brain  
A world where give and take echo the dialog of a heartbeat  
and dance the double entry of the Dow

Consider me the dream you half remember  
The promise you mean to keep  
The thing you did you not say

Consider that when you smite me  
It is your blood I spill.

**Tim Mason**  
**Cambridge, MA**



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## **Fishing for Words**

My poetry lies hidden by my inland sea;  
Land locked by urban sprawl and rust  
Which creeps against the wild lands yet outside—  
Uncivilized potential, full of seed.

The industry of life uproots my trees,  
But grasses break the concrete fighting back.  
The sea, when placid, lets me have a look,  
And when I sit beside her there's a breeze.

It haunts me, calling, like a sea bird's song,  
To rise, and dive for treasure just beyond  
The beck'ning surface of her sunlit, golden face.  
I rise and see the shore wave's sandy grace.

A cloud comes by and shadows dance around;  
Their secrets dark and mythic on the ground;  
Summoning within me, treasures lost,  
As rocks, in Springtime's thaw are raised by frost.

The ice gives way, and waters course again,  
And words come forth and fill my eager pen,  
Which trembles, like a gull's wing, headed home,  
And in that moment, I become a poem.

**Dillon McKinsey**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Tiny Tear**

This tear upon your face  
Leaves its mark, a path I will take  
To travel to that spot  
You no longer talk about.  
One tiny tear, streaming down  
The delicate mountainside  
Your complexion hides,  
Past obstacles you had no choice  
But to face, crossover, surmount.  
Turmoil scattered about  
To other places left behind.  
Invisibleness wearing away,  
Only residue of one semi-translucent  
Tear remains on the surface.  
Its own presence reveals  
A hidden truth with little time  
Left to reach it before  
This temporary opportunity  
To understand vanishes.

**Chip Ross**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Animal Rescue**

How her voice rang  
Eight years old and flushed with success  
At her first rescue  
“Look, Snuffles has found his own food”.  
They, a gaggle of mothers and their offspring  
Had surrounded the young hedgehog  
Half fascinated  
Half concerned by its inability to walk  
While she, full of compassion  
Cuddled, fed and pampered the creature back to health.  
It never even balled itself with portcullis spikes  
But safe in her arms  
Stuck its nose out  
Sniffing the night air beneath a full moon.

How she cried  
Knowing she had walked across the campsite  
With the bundle of spikes swaddled in towelling  
For the last time  
As the object of her affection flushed with youthful vigour  
Waddled wild into the undergrowth  
And a whole new adventure.

How the smile spread  
When she, sliding from beneath her quilt  
Checked the cardboard box beneath the caravan  
To be confronted by the sleeping bundle  
Who, after a night of hunting for worms and beetles  
Had returned to the haven she had created  
With soft cloth, card and dog food  
And left just in case.  
Now like a queen she holds court  
To children and adults alike  
Telling of the vagaries of hedgehogs.

**John Row**  
**Ipswich, England**

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## **Ka-Kow**

There is sound that is not mild  
a sound that is wild that calls  
in the same rhythm  
as my heart beat  
(beating in its cage)

What calls is not important  
for its reverberation is universally  
known.

It vibrates beneath(above?)  
Any level of consciousness.

There is movement that is mayhem  
chaos reigns with crawlers that creep  
yet flawless as seeds and taller than giants  
who would weep from this beauty.

Weeping giants.

I would stand on tiptoe take their hands  
and lead them to the sea  
so that their tears  
would have a home they could slip into.

Somewhere to belong.

So that the wild sounds  
the chaotic movement

allwouldbecomeliquidrhythmic.

Here I am  
No giant I am  
My tears do not rain heavy  
upon an ocean already dense.

I am barefoot  
barely present in my body

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Sandy toes curling  
As I feel myself shifting  
My heartbeat  
An echo of that reverberation.

**Candy Royalle**  
**Tamarama, Australia**

### **My Poem**

(an exercise- 21 august 2012)

My poem is for those  
Who ask for nothing  
But give, even unasked

My poem is for those  
Who have been dimmed  
By the darkness around

My poem is for those  
Who must realize how they hurt  
When they disappoint

My poem is for those  
Who are humble and free  
And share generously

My poem is, especially, for my grandmother  
Who, one night, cradled me in her strong arms  
And pointed to the stars and the moon and said  
“let them be your guide”

My poem

**Kirpal Singh**  
**Singapore**

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## **A Mountain of Ocean**

I huddle  
on the shore  
by the mountain  
w/her grief  
in my pocket,

fierce waves  
salt my toes clean  
of loose guilt.

Reasons explode  
against her rejection,

it flows between  
impotent complaints  
I sputter to evoke,  
but the mountain wins,

crumbles over my  
best intentions  
until her grief  
is all that's left.

**Rod Stryker**  
**San Antonio, TX**

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## Poeticah Mistica

When púrpara turns rosa  
That's Poetic Ah  
A wonderlust mauve heart  
glowing sacred-rose  
a d v e n t u r e  
Karma-Ahimsa  
in a beginninghaiku special  
one elephant hair closer to  
salmon satori  
The Tao  
lotus blossoms opening-closing . . . "om om and oms"  
fondle maya  
one seed planted toward  
n i r v a n a  
Kismet-Shalom  
all-purple bytes in every word halal-kosher  
kiss con brio  
star with incandescent-crescent  
shining cross  
and flickering menorah  
gleam tender pink  
one burning candle closer to  
s a l v a t i o n  
A sip of purple Appellation Poeticah Controlée  
mens sana in corpore sano  
one drop closer to  
tongues mating  
s o u l f u l in saecula saeculorum . . .

**Steve Vera**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Haiku**

Sacred Earth writes verses  
on the membrane of my heart  
metrical beats  
poems

## **Haiku 2**

Walk with angels  
through the desert  
Find the only flower  
water it

## **Haiku 3**

A star shoots across night sky  
silent wishes follow its path  
hope prevails

**Suzanne Zoch**  
Tularosa, NM



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## Poetry of 2012 Special Guest Poets

### To My Absent Muse

Yes, I will sing, and I will praise the Goddess,  
when as I see her face or hear Her voice.  
I'm Artless before the Source of All my Art,  
But still search on to find how She will choose me.

How could I refuse whatever gift you give?  
Birth Love, and Death must equally be prized.  
I can't demand you give me any gift.  
"But give me love, and I will die three times."

Oh, you may choose, but I canNot, CANNOT!  
Even by your absence, you remain my Muse,  
As I mourn the songs I cannot ever sing  
Without Your music leavening my heart.

**John Berry**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Children at the Door of Faith**

That door you're banging on could open  
You don't know, but there's a chance someone  
On the other side just might listen,

Still it doesn't mean you'll be forgiven.  
When a man prays for a dying son  
The doors to God's ears could open

And his years of sin, all of a sudden,  
Be taken to account. He'll face the door  
From the other side. God might listen

Until our dreary pleadings sicken  
Him. We better be ready to run  
After we've banged the door open,

And hide behind the reach of light. Then  
From shadows, wait until grace is won  
To step out of the dark to listen

Deeply in the silent night. Wait. And when  
You think that all your waiting is done,  
The door He's been tapping on might open  
From the inside, if you will listen.

**Lyman Grant**  
**Austin, TX**

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## Haiku

floating butterflies  
silken pink wings fluttering  
cyclamen in bloom

*Mariposas suspendidas en el aire,  
sus alas de seda rosa se agitan.  
Ciclamen en flor.*



fallen plums ferment  
yellow wasps have drunken brawl  
autumn sun tends bar

*Ciruelas caidas fermentan;  
borrachas rinen, avispas amarillas.  
El sol de otono atiende el bar.*

## Sue Littleton

Buenos Aires, Argentina (Recoleta)

## Easy Rider

That boy, wearing the longhorn cap,  
burnt orange tee shirt and pants,  
kind of like some super-guys uniform,  
peddles that bike all over Austin.

I've seen him everywhere from the Capitol  
to shops in South Austin on Congress  
and Lamar, over in Tarrytown, up  
near Threadgill's on North Lamar and once  
over in East Austin going down Pershing  
heading onto Martin Luther King.

---

He never speeds and he seems to  
always obey all traffic laws.

Funny thing is, there's nothing special about that bike.  
It's just a frame, two spoke-wheels with fat tires and  
handle bars. It doesn't even have  
a change of gears. Yet there he goes up hill  
and down without much difference in effort  
as far as anyone could tell.

Only thing special about that bike  
are the two burnt orange saddle bags  
covering each side of the rear wheel.

I always wonder what he keeps in them.  
Is there something in those bags  
that gives him some special longhorn power,  
something that lets him peddle anywhere he wants,  
without ever getting tired?

**Herman Nelson**  
**Austin, TX**

### **María's Treatments**

pain in her neck & all her joints  
led her to the ancient Chinese art  
of needles in ears & at vital points

to try chiropractic for her nerves  
pinched by disks deteriorated long ago  
her backbone's scoliotic curves

vertebrae warped one leg slightly  
shorter though such conditions  
remain unseen her beauty

---

ever unchanged ever her same  
delicious self but then from  
so many tender spots she became

an untouchable from fear  
my caresses could harm & I an outcast  
unpermitted to come too near

to stroke or pet for would only  
let her chiropractor stretch  
bend massage & gently

twist her precious limbs  
her acupuncturist to soothe  
& tune her tendons

with her connective tissue aching  
would soak in a tub of Epsom salts  
could somewhat bring

relief but professional men  
did more with fingers trained  
to feel her velvet skin

to rub & press it as I'd sit outside  
in their antiseptic waiting rooms  
she on their office beds inside

pinned or manipulated to realign  
so chi energy might flow again  
up & down her beloved spine

**Dave Oliphant**  
**Cedar Park, TX**

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## **“Speak,Memory!”**

Departure is an artform—the Art of Loss  
languages, homeland, culture, freedom  
all are traded for refuge and sanctuary.  
We are least when most vulnerable—  
borders make both sides smaller.  
A book is a caught tongue—hiding stories  
Underneath text—lives— Jewish, gay, Russian  
all subject to censorship and persecution  
When you leave, returning is no option  
All links become provisional as affairs  
Deep loves reside in memories  
with no one to share. Adaptation  
a morphing of identities to fit host bodies.  
Midwest accents, slow drawl, easy (false) smiles  
Underneath—Russian writings, Jewish family, gay deaths  
Seriousness of storms. Driving to mania-speeds, superficiality  
A way of dealing with roots is to chop the family tree.  
Another way is to translate it to foreign soil, so it might take deeper roots  
Song, language, literature carry all refugees  
in stories we have yet to hear.

**Festival Thom**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **one never laughs alone**

measure the distance  
from the full cup  
to parted lips  
she holds  
her hands steady  
there is nothing to steady  
when she sings when the flowers  
draw her into their color  
when she whispers  
close your eyes  
three two one—  
& would you  
leave one  
gift unopened

**Ric Williams**  
Austin, TX

## **Sonnet with a Healthy Fear of Fire**

See how bright flame erupts from the match head  
like light dreaming itself into being  
because creation happens in the bed  
of every ashtray even as fleeing  
ashes float to the floor, which never burns  
despite its quiet desire for new life  
articulated by strong seams yearning  
for fire to open them like doors, the knife's  
oxygen edge shouting disapproval  
as heat sears a sudden path beneath breached  
buildings till foundations must remember  
why they've always sought the swift removal  
of all flammable matter, or to teach  
air to slowly suffocate each ember.

**Robert Wynne**  
Burleson, TX

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## Poetry of the Four Founders

### Calypso's Farewell to Odysseus

My isle of Ogygia is fairer than grey Ithaca  
as I am goddess-fairer than your human Penelope.  
As long as you stay with me, you will never age.  
But Home is the most Magick of islands,  
and my Ogygia cannot hold you against that pull.  
Food you have had in feasts, and vintage years in plenty,  
and the sharing of my bed, my passion, skill and creativity.  
But I will not keep you from the sea you long for.

I would tell you to go to Hades  
and Teiresias, but Circe sent you there already.  
Instead I say your return is welcome anytime,  
and I will never make you a boar, a ram, or a bull,  
though I might just make you limp like Vulcan,  
so you won't go running off again next time.  
Use my tools to make your raft,  
and I will provision it with water, wine and corn.

Long after you and Penelope have died of age,  
and your sons and their sons, you and your tale  
will live in memory, for you made me a woman,  
I, who had been only a goddess.

**John Berry**  
Austin, TX



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## Haiku

white horses gallop  
silken manes and tails streaming  
wind herds clouds through the sky

Caballos blancos galopan,  
fluyen crines y colas sedosas.  
El viento reúne las nubs en manadas.

tulip candles grow  
japanese magnolia flaunts  
bare twigs wait for leaves

Velas tulipares relucen;  
la magnolia japonesa ostenta  
y las ramitas desnudas esperan hojas verdes.

**Sue Littleton**  
**Buenos Ares, Argentina (Coleta)**

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## **Sewing Machine**

Beautiful blouses and handsome shirts  
from the hand and the sewing machine.  
If the hand is steady and skilled,  
and the bobbin turns with plenty of thread  
and the pattern is followed as read,  
uncounted patterns will come to life,  
each unique and of elegant style.

The motor hums and rat-a-tat-tat  
goes the needle piercing the silk,  
till the skeleton pattern is covered in cloth  
like our bones are covered with skin.  
The process continues as old blouses  
and shirts wear thin and are laid aside  
for newer wear as the hand directs  
and the confident bobbin unwinds  
and the needle moves up and down  
in each new, unique and elegant style and many a pattern will live  
made by machine and crafted by hand,  
till, at last, the hard working bobbin  
runs out of thread and the motor won't hum  
nor the needle go rat-a-tat-tat, unable to pierce the silk,  
and the weary hand is too shaky and weak  
to follow the pattern as read.

There's a tale that goes:  
All will return one day  
after a long night of rest  
and the patterns will be sewn again.

**Herman M. Nelson**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **Hello, Tomorrow!**

Nostalgists pine for a better yesterday  
They compare today with mythical pasts  
Futurists pine for a better tomorrow  
They paint rosy pix of imaginary scenarios  
Existentialists sit in the present NOW  
Like Zen,all they have is this  
I live in all three dimensions,  
pining for a fourth,then a fifth!

**Festival Thom**  
**Austin, TX**

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## Poetry of 2012 Board of Directors

### In Memory Of The Ones We Love

I know your soul is up in the sky.  
I know you're an angel that can flutter and fly.  
Your happy face is missed every day.  
One day I'll be with you, forever to stay.

I look up at the clouds so puffy and white.  
I look up at the stars when it turns into night.  
I know your soul is up in the sky.  
I know you are up there, passing me by.

The time that I knew you turned into years.  
We shared good times, bad times, laughter and tears.  
There are things that we did that I'll never forget.  
Your death came too soon; I'm not over it yet.

This life we live, I know something is wrong.  
When the people we love are suddenly gone.  
I don't understand why you had to die.  
When I think about this it brings tears to my eyes.

I know you can hear me your spirit is near.  
I'll say this out loud for I want you to hear.  
I'm not afraid of death any more.  
I've never felt anything like this before.  
My life down here sometimes doesn't seem fair.  
For I am still here; and you are up there.  
The minutes and hours and months pass me by.  
It will only take time for my turn to die.

I'm one that has faith that this life never ends.  
I'll soon join you in heaven; our souls will be friends.  
I do miss you dearly; the thought makes me cry.  
But we'll soon be together to flutter and fly

**Lynn Wheeler-Brandstetter**  
**Hutto, TX**

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## **“From Boopy’s Paw to Bly’s Hand”**

Robert Bly gesticulating talking about poetry he said  
read it out loud rather than alone share it human to human  
so that the sound can drum on the ear spoken aloud  
it amplifies a soul from reading with just eyes on a page  
to mind mindset quiet like is a two on a scale from one  
to 10 but spoken out loud it becomes a nine because  
the spirit is spirit bring it in and all the while this sage  
advice was met with white paws battering about it  
trying to catch a hand on the t.v. screen set it was  
a PBS special event because Bly was present  
as in alive and he kept talking with his palm  
as a sign of high intelligence the mind is a wonderment  
but Boopy could not stand this oh yes he actually loved it  
the way the hand went from left to right up and down swirling  
around sometimes so while he lay on top of the boob tube  
television play thing talking tube he kept battling Bly’s hand  
with his furry paw while skin moved back and forth  
Boopy’s eyes were keenly wild and with his paw  
leisurely Boopy tried to reach the hand of another god  
a soul of a poet who believes in the word spoken  
not read alone but out loud from one ear to another  
and Boopy just wanted to hear it too with his triangular cat  
ears play it all again just one more time from his paw to Bly’s  
hand and this show showed Rumi oh yes the lovely Persian  
poet but Boopy does not care about poetry he just likes  
the movement and he is tapping at the glass lit up  
in picture lights cameras catching glimpses of poetic  
stirrings and he is playing still pawing now it is to a lotus  
flower in a brook or is it a stream make up your own  
imagining it is a shower as in a realm of rain so let it fall  
coming come on down hard on petals soft drops turn into  
circles from the inside out like tree rings of water sliding  
glass home fast this rain is coming in showers

**Jill Bingamon**  
**Austin, TX**

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## **End of Summer Frenzy**

This has been a brutal summer because of severe drought.  
Through my kitchen window and the glass patio doors across the room,  
I stop washing dishes to watch and hear complaining and rustling in my trees.  
Dozens of hummingbirds vie for the nectar in our feeders.  
Greedy and territorial, they are often too busy guarding  
their feeding spot to drink themselves.  
And there's also a tiny gray bird, smaller than a sparrow,  
with a bright yellow breast returning this afternoon.  
I've often seen it with its mate enjoying our birdbath.

There are, of course, mourning doves, cardinals  
and that pair of large blue jays that splash  
all the water out of the birdbath.  
Plus my personal favorites—after the cardinals—  
my family of Texas mockingbirds that serenade me  
into a good mood whether I like it or not.

Then there are the butterflies already beginning  
to migrate toward their winter quarters.  
And some of our human friends and loved ones  
also migrated to other new realms, in this dry season,  
when breath left them, and they left us behind.

If we sit quiet and just watch and listen  
to the activities in the forest, even here  
on my small patch of earth; lessons  
about patience; peace; couple-mated or Mother love;  
fighting for life and the right to live it at all cost—  
plus many other aspects of nature, our human existence  
comes more into perspective to prove that life, love  
and memories always go on, for all of nature's creatures.

**Barbara Youngblood Carr**  
**Austin, TX**

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## Poetry Late at Night

My joints do not know how  
to stay quiet when I creep  
with open eyes from the edge  
of our dreaming...  
With crackles and pops  
they match thunder  
in it's capacity to wake you  
but you sleep on...  
You don't hear the songs  
Of my heart or feel the world  
quake as I slip away from  
our heat.

The voyages I take  
late at night remain mine  
to cherish in the solitude  
of my private waking  
Unless I leave a trail  
of metaphors for you  
to follow when you wake  
and find me gone...  
The same metaphors  
I would follow back to  
the comfort of your arms  
if I were your Hansel...  
be there because your dreams  
carry you beyond the fringes  
of my poetry.

**Dr. Charles A. Stone**  
**San Antonio, TX**

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## **Under the Surface**

Putting poems in order.  
What order?  
Time perhaps?

How do I chronicle my poems?  
When the poem was conceived,  
or the latest revision?

Was this poem born pregnant with another poem  
like an aphid is born pregnant?  
Or is it like a cicada  
living underground for years  
before coming to the surface?

Can I see the poem grow in size  
as an insect larva on a plant -  
first instar very small,  
last instar slightly bigger than the adult,  
slightly bigger than the final revision?

Perhaps it is a dragonfly.  
A thought flies over the water  
and deposits a very tiny egg.  
Under the surface it hatches and grows,  
molting from one size to another,  
until one day it breaks the surface  
with a new pairs of wings.  
Now for all to see.

**Mark My Words**  
**Austin, TX**



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## **Follow my Own Advice**

Please don't make me say it twice:  
I have decided to put on ice  
Being "sweet" and being "nice".  
I am willing to pay the price.  
But it is my vice  
To be smart and wise.  
I hope I don't grow to despise  
What now I advertise

**Luis Cuellar**

**Austin, TX**

## **Eve Serves Pie**

I got your peach and apple pie with passion juice on the side.  
I got my mouth a-waterin' and feeling alive.

Was it a mango that tempted Eve or she just wanted to be free?  
She blamed the snake so he slithers on his belly for all eternity.  
He's eye-level with the dust; she's filled with lust.  
Lust for life well-lived, well-worn, free will.

She refused to sit and just hold still.  
It was not a curse, but the most shining hour.  
Eve was smart. She went for the power.

It was a set-up from the start.  
She only played her part.  
Serve up some of that forbidden fruit pie, Dear  
And roasted serpent on the side.

Ole Satan he lied. We have nothing to hide.  
And you've got nothing to fear.

**Susan Summers**

**Hutto, TX**

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## **Editorial Staff**

### **Barbara Youngblood Carr, Editor**

Author of seventeen books of poetry/prose and short stories about her Native American Cherokee heritage and growing up in Texas the South and Southwest (Nine books in her Ancestor Series partially funded by the City of Austin arts Commission); storyteller/humorist/editor/musician; Austin International Poetry Festival Board member nineteen years (Secretary many years, co-Editor for annual Anthology seven years and Editor four years); Festival Director for 2012; venue host and workshop facilitator in Austin for nineteen years; published in many newspapers, journals, anthologies and magazines; published on three continents; appointed as National Poet Laureate for the Military Order of the Purple Heart in Washington, D.C. 2005-2008; September 2009, received the first White Buffalo Native American Poet Laureate Award for her Native American writing. Visit her websites at [ancestorpoet.com](http://ancestorpoet.com) or [PoetryPics.com](http://PoetryPics.com). Complete list of publications on websites.

### **Nancy Fierstien, Editorial Assistant**

Has been involved with AIPF for 10 years and is the editor of Best Austin Poetry 2010-2011 published by the Austin Poetry Society. She also serves as editor of the edition due out this Fall. Two of her poems are in *Bigger Than They Appear*, an anthology of very short poems released by Accents Publishing in Lexington, KY, in November 2011. She's been a frequent contributor to Texas Poetry Calendars published by Dos Gatos Press, to *Di-Verse-City* anthologies published by the AIPF, *The Enigmatist* and Austin's former *Parent: Wise Magazine* and the *Cat Tales* anthologies produced in Salado, TX. "Thirsty Thursday" is a monthly venue for poets, musicians and storytellers Nancy hosts in Dripping Springs, TX.

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## **Susan Beall Summers, Editorial Assistant**

Was inspired by having her first poem published in Di-Verse-City in 2010 and gained the confidence to publish her first collections of poems, Friends, Sins & Possibilities. Since then she has been active in many open mics around Austin, has been published in other places, increased her poetry skills via on-line classes, and joined AIPF as their newest board member and project leader for Rejected! an out-reach anthology of previously rejected poems. As an over-educated, underachiever, she has a BS in biology and Master's in Curriculum and Instruction. Visit her website at [www.tidalpooeoet.com](http://www.tidalpooeoet.com) <<http://www.tidalpooeoet.com>> to learn more.

## **John Berry**

John Berry writes Muse-centered poetry celebrating each of the nine muses. He has won more than two dozen prizes in contests ranging from international to local. In addition to being in a dozen anthologies and three internationally distributed magazines, he has four books (three still in print) and three more he is preparing for publication. One of the latter contains a short epic poem (only 2151 lines) about the return of the Holy Grail to the 21st century, and how it got to the Hill Country. He is the yellow man among the Four Founders of AIPF which began 20 years ago.

## **Jill Bingamon**

Has dabbled in poetry for many years, is Vice-Chair for API in 2012, and is a prolific writer of poetry.

## **Lynn Wheeler-Brandstetter**

From the rocky mountains of beautiful British Columbia to the good old south Texas heat, Lynn Wheeler-Brandstetter came to Austin in the 80's. She started writing poetry at a very young age and enjoys writing poetry based on current and past experiences, with the hopes of touching

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the lives of the people she encounters. Lynn is a definite workaholic and it's hard to convince her to slow down. She is a true Piscean and has an intrinsic love for water, the ocean and anything that lives or swims in water. Imaginative, compassionate, kind and giving, she has spent several years volunteering her time for nonprofit organizations. She is loyal, dedicated and has been committed in making a difference in the poetry community. Lynn has two beautiful daughters, Meagan and Kaitlan, and three grandsons, Hunter, Garrett and Caleb. She is happily married to a wonderful loving husband, Curtis Dale Brandstetter, who supports all her endeavors.

### **Elneta Owens**

Has dabbled in poetry since high school but never took it seriously nor tried to develop it until last year (2011); took a Creative Writing Course at ACC in Spring 2011; published in ACC's Fall 2011 Literary Journal; joined two Critique Groups; member of Austin Poetry Society, Austin International Poetry Festival Society, Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators; Writers League of Texas; attended Writers League of Texas Poetry Retreat in Alpine, TX in July 2012; writes for fun.

### **Jos Masonmazou**

Is relatively new to the Austin poetry scene but is very active in attending venues, writing her poetry and bonding with other poets in the community.

## **Cover Artist, Cover Designer & Judges**

### **Luis Cuellar, Cover Artist**

Born in El Salvador, began taking photos with what at the time was known as a pocket camera at the age of 11. Didn't begin using a 35 mm camera until Professor Goodrich from LSU lent him a camera to

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shoot particle tracks in the bubble chamber experiment for Modern Physics in the fall of 1984. Bought his own personal SLR camera when he graduated with a BS in Physics from LSU, but really took off as a dedicated amateur photographer only after acquiring a DSLR and taking photos of the Hanover College campus as Winter rolled into Spring of 2007

Moved to Austin, TX in the Fall of 2007 and became friends with musicians that encouraged him to continue taking photos. Met with fellow poets while working as a database programmer for a Texas State agency.

### **Rebecca Byrd Bretz, Cover Designer**

Rebecca Byrd Bretz is an award-winning cover designer and artist who makes her home in the Texas Hill Country. View art online at [www.rebeccabyrdbretz.com](http://www.rebeccabyrdbretz.com) <<http://www.rebeccabyrdbretz.com>> . Inquiries welcome at [re.creative.hub@gmail.com](mailto:re.creative.hub@gmail.com).

### **Budd Powel Mahan, Guest Judge—for the Adult Anthology**

Budd Powell Mahan served as the 16th and 19th president of the Poetry Society of Texas, the oldest continuously active state poetry society. He was president of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc 2004-2006. He was editor of *Encore*, the anthology of NFSPS from 1999 to 2004.

On November 12, 2005, Mr. Mahan's manuscript, *Falling to Earth*, won the Edwin M. Eakin Memorial Book Publication Award. On December 23 of that same year, his manuscript *Harvest*, won the Stevens Manuscript competition of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. His book, *Witness* was the 2010 winner of the John and Marian Morris Manuscript Competition of the Alabama Poetry Society and in 2011 he was the winner of the Dallas Poet's Community chapbook contest with his book, *One Saturday*.

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Mr. Mahan is an actor who has appeared in many theatrical performances in the Dallas area, as well as many speaking engagements and poetry readings.

He has won awards for both painting and photography, but he has found his greatest fulfillment through his writing.

### **Suzanne Zoch—Guest Judge—for the Youth Anthology**

Suzanne Zoch graduated from college with degrees in education and psychology. For thirty years she taught school and enrichment classes in Jackson, Mississippi and Austin, Texas. While living in Austin, she was a volunteer for AIPF. After retiring, she and her husband moved to New Mexico where she started Youth Enrichment Services, Inc., a nonprofit organization that offers enrichment programs to indigent children in Otero County, New Mexico. Teaching children to write poetry is one of the classes offered by her organization. Suzanne has written eight children's books which have been distributed to indigent children who do not have books in their homes. She has also published two poetry books which were sold to raise money for her organization. Greeting cards containing her poems are sold in several gift shops. The money from the sales also provide funds for Youth Enrichment Services. The Austin International Poetry Festival is pleased to have this educator, poet and philanthropist judge the youth anthology this year.





..... *Dreams...* We all have them. And poets dream. They dream all the time. And among all those poetic dreamers, several of note live amongst us who followed their dream.



They are the Four Founders of the Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF): John Berry, Herman M. Nelson, Festival Thom and Sue Littleton.



As we celebrate the Festival in September 2012 — our 20th Anniversary year — we pay homage to our Founders who had the dream of Austin, Texas holding an annual International Poetry Festival 20 years ago. Their dream became reality, and is now the largest unjuried Poetry Festival in the United States.



The Founders, along with board members and volunteers who have given freely of their time and service, ensure our Festival Dream continues . . .



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