

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.

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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)

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 nature's 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“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

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

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

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)

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

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

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

“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

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

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

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

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

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 or 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.

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>> 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

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

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>> . Inquiries welcome at 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*.

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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