

REJECTED!

*-the anthology where what was
once rejected is now accepted.*

2012

An unofficial & supplemental publication of AIPF

Edited by Barbara Youngblood Carr

[May contain adult content and be unsuitable for children under 18 and
those with more refined sensibilities.]

Preface

The idea of a *Rejects Anthology* is the brainstorm/dream of Susan Beall Summers. She knew herself that most poets suffer the agony of rejection letters and never winning prize money in poetry/prose contests. Even those of us lucky enough to have won a few contests or to have won some modicum amounts of prize money or manuscript publication opportunities, have won far more loss and rejection than winning acumens. We all have at least one poem that we have written that we have always thought was one of our best and one of our favorite “babies” – but nobody else with the power of publication thought as highly of our creative words as we did.

The idea was pitched to the Austin Poets International, Inc. Board immediately following the 2011 Festival – but was dismissed. It gained new breath and momentum by/from me at Board meetings in the fall of 2011 and finally in September 2012, the *Rejects Anthology* has become a reality!

Because of the enthusiasm of Susan (and her touting the idea at local venues, to other poets, etc. – around 50 poets have submitted their creative babies – as rejected writings by many other publications - many of them that consider themselves to be the best, etc. or too elite for the common poet) even though many of these poems now published in the First Edition of the *Rejects Anthology* are as good, creative and as imaginative and well-written fraught with evocative thoughts etc. as many I have seen published in those great books/anthologies elsewhere.

And it is going to be a celebration! There is a Rejected Poets Party during the 2012 Festival – where all rejected poets published get in for the price of a book (\$8.00). Others, who are not published in the Anthology, may party with us – for the price of a book at the door (\$8.00) – a modest price covering the printing of the book – an ink pen to write more poetry with and a button to wear – all with the LOGO printed thereon: “What was once Rejected is now Accepted!”

We hope you enjoy reading this Rejected Poets Anthology – and we look forward to publishing more of these in the future.

Editor,
Barbara Youngblood Carr



Texas
Commission
on the Arts

Investing in a Creative Texas

This anthology and the Austin International Poetry Festival have been funded in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts and as an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.



Cultural Arts
Division
CITY OF AUSTIN

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

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Turning Rejection Into Success: a True Story

The idea for *Rejected!* came to me shortly after the 2011 AIPF when I was working a job where my boss just ran me into the ground every day. She even told me that none of my co-workers liked me because I asked too many questions. She said, "You're just so odd, you may never fit in."

One day I got a rejection letter for a poem, but instead of making me feel bad, I just laughed and thought, "This letter proves I am still in the game. I am still alive and have more to offer."

Barbara Youngblood Carr and I talked about the rejected anthology idea, and I got so excited I created a Gmail account and drafted an outline of the project. I was so miserable with my j-o-b that I needed a creative outlet. Barbara mentioned the idea to the AIPF Board and it was not well-received. Some members questioned the "negativity" surrounding the title. Not being easily deterred, I asked Festival Thom about it, and he thought it was a great idea, too, so I followed up by sending a letter to the Board presenting my idea thinking, "If I explained it better and let them know that I would do all the leg work and invest my own time and money to make it happen, they would have a revelation and embrace it with wild enthusiasm." I never got a response and shelved the idea for a while.

Then the Board underwent sweeping changes and my original supporter, Barbara Youngblood Carr, became 2012 Festival Director. I asked her if we could revive my idea and she said, "Oh, it's going to happen. I'll make sure of it!" Barbara is no stranger to new ideas and knows how to bring them to fruition. I joined the board in July, not to promote my idea, but because I believe in AIPF and wanted to help pull the festival together in about two months!

I submitted an official proposal to the board chairperson, Lynn Brandstetter, and was able to convince her that I could and would do it and got her excited too. I knew just the venue I wanted to use to host the launch party and Shadrack, owner of Full English Café, gave an immediate 'yes' to everything.

Then I had to get poets to submit. I promoted on Facebook, through personal e-mail and through poets I knew and got the first 3 poets. Our AIPF computer whiz, James Jacobs, sent out a mass e-mail and Elzy Cogswell, of Austin Poetry Society, picked it up and promoted the project. I got about ten more poets and then things stalled again. I had less than two weeks until the deadline. My original goal was 40 poets and I was only half-way there. I felt like this was a good start but not enough to be truly successful. I was trying to reconcile myself by saying, "Oh well, at least I tried." Still, I was not satisfied.

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I printed flyers and posters and recruited helpers/promoters like Festival Thom who got me more submissions trickling in. At this point I was told it was a bad idea by two well-respected, successful poets who objected to the title. One said it made her "feel sad," which made me feel sad and dumb. I felt discouraged, but by this time I was in too deep to stop. Normally, I would agree to use positive language, but the idea was firmly rooted in this theme of being inspired by rejection of some of our poetry, but we are not losers!

I e-mailed the members of AIPF directly and got several more poems submitted. Some members also didn't agree with the idea and their first thought was that they had been rejected for *Di-Verse-City*, the official anthology of AIPF and I felt terrible that I made anyone else feel rejected.

Next, I started going to venues, approaching poets and talking it up. I followed up, begged, posted, flattered, e-mailed and annoyed until I got a few more. People started saying, "I know, I know, I will send you a poem!" I extended the deadline and kept promoting and suddenly it reached some kind of critical mass and it just launched! In one week I went from 26 poets to over 40! Now at print there are 50+!

Thank you for supporting AIPF and consider membership if you are not a member already. The festival weekend is full of workshops, city-wide readings, poetry performances, networking, creative ideas, and sharing a community spirit with like minded people who are "so odd they may never fit in!" HA! How's that for turning rejection around?

With Much Love & Acceptance,
Susan B. Summers, *Rejected!* Project Leader
& Barbara Youngblood Carr,

P.S. The sale of the anthology goes right back to AIPF.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Special Thanks

- ❖ Lynn Brandstetter, Chairman of the Board Austin International Poets (AIP) for supporting the idea for *Rejected!*
- ❖ Jill Bingamon, Co-Chair of the Board of Austin International Poets, Editorial Assistant.
- ❖ My friend, Katherine “Clay” Gibson, for encouraging me in all my zany ideas and Editorial Assistant
- ❖ Festival Thom, one of the founders of AIPF for all he does for Austin poetry and for promoting this project.
- ❖ Shadrack, owner of Full English Café for being so open and willing to accommodate the project in any way possible.
- ❖ Elzy Cogswell, President of Austin Poetry Society for promoting the project.
- ❖ Full English Café for hosting our *Rejected!* party and Midnight-to-Dawn open mic. Show your appreciation by “liking” them on FaceBook.

From a Rejected Poet and FaceBook Posting (with permission):

Congratulations! You are *Rejected!*

Wait--why am I congratulating you? It is very simple. You have now entered into the ranks of esteemed poets such as Sylvia Plath, Gertrude Stein, and e.e. cummings, and profound writers such as Stephen King, Margaret Mitchell, Beatrix Potter, and Dr. Suess. What does this elite society of writers share, you ask? Why, rejection of course!

Now it is your turn to receive rejection, to accept him into your home, to offer him tea, and then to remind him that William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* was rejected 20 times before it finally became published. Oh yes, rejection is just one step, or maybe two or three or 121 (just ask Robert Pirsig), but certainly not the last step--unless you allow it to be.

So, congratulations for being published in AIPF's first annual *Rejected!* anthology! May this remind you that rejection is not for failures, it is for those that have the courage to try, the determination to try again, and the faith in their talent to keep trying. Because some writer out there did not receive a rejection letter today and you just may be the writer to receive a letter of a different kind tomorrow.

-----Shae O'Brien

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Rejected Thom has entered too many poetry competitions and won none! He hosts open mikes such as Expressions and Full English Cafe -where all may be heard.

In Praise of Rejection

Once I entered every poetry contest sponsored by APS
I won nothing/lost a close friend
On whom I had relied for advice on what was "winning" poetry.
I sent in Texas poetry for the Texas Poetry Calendar (rejected),
Sent in poems for the Capitol Metro buses (ditto).
I finally realized I am an oral poet/an improviser
Who works with musicians who also improvise.
This has freed me from competing with other poets -
When we need every poem ever written to explicate all our lives.
Folk poems for folk Festivals, country poems for country folk,
Gritty city poems for metropolitans, rhyming lines for those lovers of rhyme,
Traditional verse for elders, modern for modernists
Rejection only comes from being out of context
A fish on dry land, a bird in a cage, a camel in a cave
I would like to read these lines to you (with a musician noodling),
But I rely upon your wisdom and intelligence to allow this
Vogon poem into your consciousness.

***Vogons** are a fictional alien race from the planet Vogsphere in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series by Douglas Adams, Vogons are described as mindlessly bureaucratic, aggressive, having "as much sex appeal as a road accident" and the writers of "the third worst poetry in the universe". (Wikipedia)*

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You Will Not Be Read (*Lasciate ogni speranza*)

Antiquarian academic practices demand a degree of publishing
Yet the esoteric nature of such works gains a small and diminishing audience
Unlike Tax Legislation, people will not pay for esoteric treatises on topics remote to their lives
New techniques, topics and styles of presentation need to be employed
To engage the wider community to academic studies and their necessary reports

As in book launches, academic authors need to address more than Faculty heads.
Public presentations a la TED talks and NASA Mars landing presentations
Can utilize more than PowerPoint mannerisms. Skype, blogs, websites, FACEBOOK etc.
Are the new tools of explication and sharing data democratizing information further.

Water is No Virgin

When you were not looking, her body of water
threw a net up to the stars and captured Light
sprinkled them upon her waters, reflecting upon distance.
If you were well deep or ocean, sea or lake or river,
you would have seen this in the dead of night
when all else are sleeping and only comets and meteors blaze
across a firmament of black star skies. Signals exchanged
as if skywaters were Nut, Neptune and Poseidon reborn
nightly /bathed in secret waters of a womb world
whispered silent in the dark of night. Were you a witness?
Did you see that surface waving? Know deep kiss of horizons?
Were you there when water came alive again with dancing dolphins?
and kept the Heavens wrapped in swaddling clothes
so we might be born in waves, and land on sands
and lose our gills and memories -of deeper oceans than the sky
and gods and goddesses with no names?

Patricia Dixon is a member in good standing with AIPF and plans to attend the Festival this year. Blessings.

Texas Transformation

My heart's in Texas and I am one
with the varied beauties
that surround me here.
From El Paso's misty mountains
to the mesquite-covered flatness
of the central plains to steel skyscrapers
jutting above the freeways of my Houston home.
Amazement grips me at the paradoxes here—
Trinity Bay, redfish, refineries and Roseate Spoonbills.
This alien sister to the exotic, tropical lushness
of my native Louisiana is a continual delight
and I flourish here; a flower orchid amid cacti
growing hardier with each passing year.
Now, the paradoxes are all inside—
Wordsmith, writer, friend and fisherwoman.
Texas has transformed me
from a soft, Southern Belle to a sturdy cowgirl
in denim jeans and red-leather boots.
Louisiana has been left behind.
Now, Houston is home.

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Washington Luis Lanfredi I'm 32, born in London, but I live in Sao Paulo Taubate, Sao Paulo, Brazil. I am married for four years and I have a daughter six months old.

Poetic Thought

The light illuminates the joy of our being,
walking and singing,
and feeling heart;
We are strong and happy beating
hands with faith and resolution,
let's all join hands;
In this world of imagination,
Always seek the fun.

Poetry of a Dreamer

I'm not a poet,
wanted to be,
but I can only think;
I cannot write,
My Portuguese is wrong,
but my imagination is great.

My thoughts are beautiful,
but when I write,
out gibberish;
But I love this life,

shy as a thinker,
is also a poet.
I'll keep trying
following a path alone;
Thinking and thinking,
because one day maybe
be able to be a poet.

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Sue Littleton is a Texas Poet who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her poems have been published in anthologies and on-line literary magazines in the U.S. and Canada. At least one of her poems has been rejected per year by an insensitive editor. The following have been rejected by Poetry Society of Texas and Canadian on-line magazine, *Ascent Aspirations*.

"Bad poems which I have written but which I love as a mother loves a homely child."

Aubrey

My aunt Aubrey,
the only aunt of seven I never called "Aunt,"
the one with whom I shared
the most time as a child was mad,
in and out of psychiatric hospitals,
caught in the throes of black depression,
sobbing pitifully behind closed doors,
hooked on coca cola,
faithful card partner of endless games
of go-fishin' and gin rummy.

Her dark desperate eyes
still haunt me, although they have been closed
for over thirty years.
Toward the end of her life she was toothless,
overweight, tucked away in a nursing home,
and I missed dozens of chances to visit her.
(She could not bear to be taken
out of the home,
even for a short ride in the car.)

I remember her funeral, Eastland, Texas, four mourners
and one of those strange elderly females
who appear at small town funerals
just to prove they are alive.

Aubrey was so incredibly stunning
I could not believe my eyes,
her lost youth restored by the undertaker's magic,
full rosy cheeks, softly curled dark hair, unlined face,
she lay there in her coffin,
a faintly mocking smile on her lips,
as if to say,
"You see? Indeed yes, I was beautiful once."

Rebirth

The traveling exhibit is by a new generation
of Mexican sculptors and painters;
works deeply rooted in that fertile mixture of vitality,
courage, anger, proud optimism,
that is Mexico itself.

Revolution is a huge wooden panel fifteen feet high,
thirty feet long.

Thick green prickly-pear leaves
are nailed in horizontal rows from one side
of the panel to the other;

red paint has been splashed across the cactus pads
like crimson gouts of blood
in a powerful and unforgettable message.

The exhibit continues for several weeks;
and then, one afternoon,
on another visit to the museum-art gallery,

I observe a moving and surely unforeseen development
the young artists never imagined.

The hundreds of crucified cactus leaves
are thrusting pale filaments
from the base of each sharp thorn.

Undaunted by their incarnation into political statement,
they refuse to be intimidated,

brave roots seeking the earth
in a natural affirmation
of hope and renewal.

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Robert Wynne earned his MFA from Antioch University. He is the author of 3 full-length collections of poetry, including “Museum of Parallel Art” (2008, Tebot Bach Press), and his latest, “Self-Portrait as Odysseus”, which depicts Odysseus as a modern day business traveler. He has been coming to AIPF since late 1998, when he still lived in California.

Please consider the 5 poems below for publication in Rejected. Here are the details for each poem previously Rejected: Confessional Poem (Rufous City Review - 2012), Tealight Eats a Cookie (Rattle - 2005, Ginosko Literary Review - 2007, Tatoo Highway - 2008 & The Enigmatist - 2011), Tealight Plays Foosball (Mid-American Review - 2005, New Orleans Review - 2007, The Fourth River - 2008, Weave Magazine - 2009 & The Enigmatist - 2011), Reflection on the Unexamined Life (New Hampshire Review - 2005), and Rejection Letter at the Aquarium (The Enigmatist - 2009).

Confessional Poem

I want so desperately
for you to like this poem.
I should tell you I'm drinking beer
at The Map Room in Chicago
and outside the window
cigarette butts litter the ground
next to a dented black Honda.
A sign across the street reminds me
no trucks over 5 tons are allowed
so I'll be brief.
After giving it much thought
I've decided that you exist,
with your questionable wardrobe,
unspoken regrets, and your wild desire
to like this poem. Thank you
for being there when I needed you.
The driver of a beige Mercedes
just ran the stop sign at the corner.
He would never have been so generous.

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Rejection Letter at the Aquarium

Everything looks better
After bright water suffuses it.
Coral flutters in shadows
Hewn by radiance reflected

Palely off fish scales. If
Only your poems had
Emanated even a
Modicum of the light

Revealed in silence beneath
Each wave as they crest
Tirelessly toward shore.
Usually, language is so unreliable
Roughly, snapper and sole
Never even write.
Someday they'll learn.

Susan J. Rogers lives in Georgetown, TX. She is a member of the Austin Poetry Society (APS). Her recent poems include: "Tara for Anger" rejected 2010 by Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature

Tara for Anger

I.

Riding on a crocodile¹,
Tara frowns at the boy,
Wrapped in a hoodie,
Curled head to knee
in a ball of anger.
"Tutare²," he says
as if in a dream.
She shouts at him,
until he turns his head.
Then, the boy's delusions,
Reflected in the sharp words
He always hurls at others;
The explosion of anger from them
It always elicits;
How he always feels so wronged
When anger is thrown back at him;
Now, are gone.
He is dazed, and does not remember
How his thoughts slid back
into the ocean like the tide.

II.

Her hair standing on end,
Tara hears the Anglo woman
Call the Mexican waiter, "Boy."
The waiter takes the order
Then whirls around
in a streak of white hot light.

He sees nothing but his murderous thoughts,
But something inside him, from his childhood,
starts to chant “Tre” and “Pe³.”
Then he sees Tara offering him a cup of cold water.
He drinks it and they walk together
Down the cool dark streets
until his arms and legs stop shaking.
Then she goes back to the restaurant
to deal with the Anglo woman.

III.

The graduate student felt her mind melt,
so she signed herself into the hospital,
But when her insurance ran out
and they told her they were going to transfer her
to the state hospital,
She took a sheet and started tying knots.
She thought, just for a second, of Tara,
But her despair was too strong and her mind too soft.
She shrugged and continued tying knots.
Then Tara rushed at her, wearing skulls
that rattled and bounced at crazed angles.
Tara shot red thunderbolts at her
from her hands and feet.
Terrified, the student dropped her train of thought.
As her heart pounded,
she saw her last scrap of hope fly up.
She caught it and squeezed hard.
Now, Tara teaches her Lesson One:
How to meditate for one second
in twenty-four hours
in an uncluttered mind
she forgot she ever knew.
And tomorrow, Lesson Two.

Notes:

¹ Tara is known as “Ferocious Compassion,” “Invincible Courage” and “Impeccable Virtue.” As “Destroys Negativity” she appears sitting on a crocodile.

² Tutare (Tibetan) “removes fears.”

³ Tre and Pe (Tibetan) “destroys unwholesome plans.”

Juan Manuel Perez: Texas Poet, Juan Manuel Perez, is the author of several poetry books including, WUI: Written Under The Influence Of Trinidad Sanchez, Jr. (2011).

The Atkinson Diet

(Rejected by Science Fiction Journal, February 2011)

For James Henry Atkinson*

Hunger rides a plain specter
Raised high, yet dull, the guillotine
Ready to take some part of the body
Ready to paint its wooden base red
With the basic life of such a base life
A trap strategically built for hunger
Of its "us or them" until the end
Conundrum of product and consumer
The heavy roar of an empty belly
The senseless fury of a spring loaded bar
The dance of death between rat and cheese

**British inventor of a spring-loaded mouse trap*

Easy Sale

(Rejected too many times to count or list, 2010-present)

Want to earn money from the comfort of your home?

Hey baby, look at my large breasts.

For a limited time only, you could earn big cash now!

Would you like to touch them?

All you have to do is call this number now!

I'm wet and waiting here just for you.

We'll rush you this get rich fast kit, just call!

How bad do you want me, baby?

Absolutely free, just pay shipping and handling

Do you want to see me from behind?

Don't wait! Don't hesitate! Call now!

Oh baby, I've been really bad.

The life you wanted is just a phone call away!

I can't wait to talk to you baby.

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Susan Beall Summers is a lifelong southerner and Georgia peach who has been writing poems since she was twelve. Currently she's living the life an over-educated under-achiever and traveling frequently with her husband. Her first poetry collection, *Friends, Sins & Possibilities* was published by dreamersthreepress in 2011. Visit www.tidalpoolpoet.com for more info.

rejected for a Poetry in Dance contest in San Francisco, CA

A Gulf Coast Song to Tell

Calypso cricket come from Tobago way, now he down in Louisiana,
where they's warming up to play.

He chirpin' a calypso rhythm, doing it real well. He's got charisma and a song to tell.

Jus' different, it ain't wrong. He learn a little Cajun French so he can get along.

He's learning how to jive with the Cajun way -- da tings they do, da tings they say.

He find an oil drum wash ashore and taught muskrat how to tune.

He hammer on that drum and beat it with his tail

and soon it sound so sweet - like droppin' pebbles in a well-

Step aside, little cricket with your island beat, now feel the zydeco in dis summer heat.

Not tryin to be controllin', not 'tendin' to be rude, but dis our town and it jus what we do.

The fiddle crab rosin up his bow, tapping out the rhythm while the tide down low.

He playing fiddle trying to woo his girl, standing tall to entice her. She jus' twirl and whirl.

Lil' crab he play the zydeco an' he jus' caint stop.

Pistol shrimp join the chorus, "Click, Snap, Pop!"

Ole Alligator back from hunting down in Oxbow lake .

Oyster catcher play rubboard on dat ole gator's back.

Gator join in the fun when he give his tail a whack.

Frogs play along with one fine bass line. They know the tune and keep the perfect time.

Marsh grass sway, got nothing to say; they jus' dancin' the warm night away.

Blue crab waltzin' holding his *cherie*, they dancin' to da beat,

ready for some mud loving in dis summer heat.

Fais do do and here we go - marsh rat steel drums like he born for it,

Mix it wit da zydeco and givin' it a fit.

Until, Pelican came flyin, crusin kind'a low.
Was late for him to be about so they wonder what he know.
He actin' kind'a crazy. His eyes was buggin' mad.
His wing was black and lazy like he been hurt real bad.
Gasping, he crash-landed in the middle of the band.
"Brothers, can you help me, I really need a hand.
It's coming, friends, it's everywhere.
It's dark and thick as gumbo churnin' on the wave.
Be quick, be gone for your life to save."

Blue crab heeded well - went far into the deep,
fiddler grabbed his gal and made a quick retreat.
Muskrat scampered to spread word along the way.
Marsh grass say nothing, just stand and sway.
Cricket waited. He wanted to know more.
He had traveled far and seen many other shore.
He lost his snappy beat with all the desperate news.
He left off his music, learned a new kind o' blues.
He was sad and lonely and lost his love of song
'till he met up wit dat muskrat as he traveled on alone.

"Man, you been carryin' a mighty heavy load. You need calypso," but cricket shook his head
"den we zydeco - an old tune you should know."
"I can't," the cricket said and told muskrat what he'd seen.
"I know," muskrat persisted, "it's like one bad and scary dream,
but we got to have da music, got to cry, sing and yell.
We got to keep on living, we have a song to tell.
Don't you fret about our friends, the sea will take revenge.
From summer into fall, she will make amends."
When things get so dire, it's just your job to chirp, sing, inspire."

So cricket say a chirp, a tiny sound at first, den he started singing for everything he's worth.
Muskrat join and they cry and sing and yell.
They goin' keep on livin' cause they got a song to tell.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Quiana Walker: This Mississippi native has lyrics flowing through her veins. A lover of music and writing for years, Q.J. Walker holds a degree in Music Business from the University of Memphis. In her spare time, she likes to play the piano, guitar, and shoot pool.

Selfish of me

I apologized so many times that eventually they turn into lies.
how many times can I say it and turn around and do it again?
Let's not pretend..either stick it out or we should let this go..
I'm not perfect and I'm far from being committed...
I do care, but my lust wanders from here to there..
in the end I want you..just hope it ain't too late to be with you...
as I chase all these temporary things...
I leave the truth behind hoping you will wait on me
and not leave me forever...
I know I'm wrong but selfish I am....

“Stressed”

Life's trials seem at times too much to bear...
So much burden...
So much stress...
Looks like it will never be repaired...
They say never give up because your breakthrough is on the rise
But all you see at the moment is a slow and painful demise

You wanna pull the trigger
Pop a ton of pills
Let your soul fly away
Your earthly body peels
Never knowing the impact you made or left
Once you went away

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Yea we're blessed, but life makes us stress
Even when you try to give your best
You're still left feeling stress...
Easy to run away
Easy to let go
Easy to say goodbye
Forgetting to fight for more so instead...

You wanna pull the trigger
Pop a ton of pills
Let your soul fly away
Your earthly body peels
Never knowing the impact you made or left
Once you went away
Once you went away

Barbara Youngblood Carr: With more accolades than she can mention, Barbara has been rejected more times than she cares to count, but remember, Babe Ruth had more strikeouts than any other player. She just keeps swinging for the high seats.

Remembering The Wall

Freedom is not free. Night after night in the 70's and 80's, scores of U.S. Army tanks rolled over German cobblestone streets before dawn, their metal parts crunching and squeaking toward military exercise destinations. My husband was riding with them in some military exercise convoy and I was at home, restless with anxiety.

Soldiers, like mine, were on call to answer military alerts any time of day or night; families, like ours, who learned how to be patient and wait, attended regularly-scheduled mandatory training sessions about how to evacuate when the time came. We all knew leaving Germany to return to America would never happen as planned because the German people would want to escape, too, and traveling at all would have been ultimate pandemonium leaving many dead or injured in the wake of human desperation and drive for self-preservation.

A frightening time in history when we lived there for six years, experiencing The Cold War, first-hand. A huge Wall was built to divide West from East Germany, separating territory and families; The Wall literally hammered in place through the center of at least one small village, relatives divided by history from living together; they had to obtain special permits in order to visit with one another.

East German armed soldiers ensconced in watchtowers had binoculars trained on us American tourists; we looked back at them through our own binoculars. Between our viewing place and The Wall – mines, with several meters of earth or snow barely covering their metal parts – waited.

A thin layer of pure, white snow attempted to disguise the edges
of hard death waiting there for unsuspecting adventurers,
like us, or those sneaking through the minefields after dark to escape;
the ones hoping to find a new and better life that beckoned
to them on our side of The Wall. Many other East Germans
were shot by snipers, too, when they attempted to escape.
No. Freedom is never free.

Echoes of Ekphrastic Poetry

Memories of great art
I have seen in Europe
and in special museums
all over America
leave traces and marks
of their beauty
and imagined thoughts
of their creators in my mind,
fill my eyes with colors
and sparks of creative madness.
Somehow I must find
a huge chunk
of pure, white marble,
buy some hammers
and chisels, canvasses,
tubes of fresh paint
and all sizes of brushes

so I can get started.
My creativity is stirring
again and I must answer
my muses who now taunt
and tempt me while
they scream
on the edges
of my own madness.
I want to drink
from the same chalice
the old masters
drank from.
I daydream about
leaving some creative
offerings behind
that will make me
immortal, too.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Mary Riley I have been writing poetry on and off for around twenty years. In 1997 I won second place with my poem "Modern Commandments" for the ACC Phi Theta Kappa creative writing poetry contests. My poetry has been used twice in in the *ACC Rio Review* but mainly in other anthologies like *American College Anthology*, *Lucidity* and three of my poems were published in AIPF's *Di-Verse City* in 2007, 2008 and 2009. My poem "Austin Never Sleeps" was recently published in the *Lucidity Poetry Journal* for the Winter 2011 publication. I have a bias for clarity and I write mainly on what I am passionate about.

The following "rejected" poems were submitted to Austin Poetry Annual Contests May 2011

Tanka

A church plant with hands
looked real synthetic until
women watered it.
"Hell it is marijuana!"
Naïve women "We been had."

Parasiempre

Parasiempre the screen name said.
"What does it mean.?" "It's Spanish for always, forever."
"It's just a word don't have to mean it."
He didn't Austin to Tucson and "The twain never meets."

"Come journey with me in cyberspace
where there are virtual flings without any stings.
A place where: hands pretend to reach;
Lips pretend to kiss; arms pretend to embrace;

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

A place with: longing without belonging;
Love without commitment; Fantasies without reality;
Laughter without tears,”

“Siempre, Para Siempre?”

“Just a word I am not offering it.”

“You wouldn’t know how.”

“It’s hands that reach; Lips that kiss;
Arms that embrace; Belonging without longing;
Love with commitment; Fantasies which become realities;
And it’s laughter with tears; it’s real and we can claim it.
If you can’t write and ride it in cyberspace.”

“Siempre, Para Siempre?”

“Asi Tavez Nunca.”¹

¹ Last line English Translation “Well maybe never.”

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Marcie Eanes is an independent journalist/poet whose work has appeared in numerous publications, most notably *Essence* and *Seventeen* magazines. She is a copy editor, motivational speaker and workshop presenter and former reporter for the *Grand Rapids Press* and *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* newspapers.

Marcie has shared her poetry on stages in Los Angeles, New York and many other venues across the country. Her poem, "Quiet Femininity," was selected for 2011 *Di-verse-city* anthology published by the Austin International Poetry Festival.

Her poetry book, *Sensual Sounds*, is available on <http://www.amazon.com/> and <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/>. After 15 years in Las Angeles, Marcie now calls Racine, WI home. marcie_eanes2@yahoo.com.

Evolution

Dreams are exhilarating movements

of the unbarred soul

Silently waiting and urgently yearning

to soar at any age

The choice to glide

far beyond the familiar

Rests with me

alone

One small step taps unquenchable passion

from lovingly closeted dreams

Faith, courage, determination, grit

become intimate dance partners

as we improvise

to sacred songs

known only to God and me

My dreams and I rapidly spin

tighter and tighter

The longer we practice

our intricate steps

For the world awaits our debut

on the brightly lit stage

called Life

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Limited Space

Tightly grasping

yesterday

regret

hate

unbelief

fear

failure

Stubbornly withholding

forgiveness

trust

love

faith

joy

generosity

Ultimately kills

healing

dreams

confidence

tenacity

prosperity

soul

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Dr. Charles A. Stone Dr. Stone is a fictional character who has been rejected by some of the finest poetry journals, even when he bribed editorial boards. He has been a regular feature of *Di-Verse-City* and the Austin poetry scene.

away up in the pretty sky it floats

after White Balloon by Deb Akers

what if
the white ball-oon
above the reach of the tipsytopsy trees
were really yellow moon
dressed up
in its differentlies
and when it sailed away
to the cheery, cheers
and tiny shouts
of tottering little tots
to be replaced by teary tears
and from mommies
kissies and lots of squeezies

would the curious tide
follow with its
schools of curious fish
on a curious-er ride
bobbingandnoddingandbobbing
on the end of a string
danglin
g
from a bluer-than-blue sky
on an impossible january spring (?)
day

Rejected by *Borderlands* 2008

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Hill Country Refrain

When we dance across Texas
to the twinkle in Willie's eyes
We must two-step around the edges
of the high plains where empty
milkweed pods smile at the setting sun
And must hold our hats near Lubbock
where the wind turns corners on two wheels

When we waltz through a thick blanket
of desert sand to the song of coyotes
echoing across the graves of their ancestors
We must pause a short interlude
to acknowledge what we owe to the land
Before we continue our flat-footed glide
past cemeteries where names are piled upon
names and history seeps through stone

Until we find ourselves in the Hill Country
where musicians bare their souls to the stars
And we stop patient as oaks rooted in rock
to let the moon run her cool hand across our brows
while we savor our place in the world
Ever thankful that we are not like old stones
rushing with flood waters to the Blackland Prairie

Rejected by *Texas Poetry Calendar* 2011

Janet McCann is an old Texas poet who has taught at A&M since 1969.

Listen:

Her voice was a dark velvet well,
It swelled around you, inviting,
Pulling, her voice was a fainting couch,
A swirl of indigo. It was a whirlpool,
Her voice, with forms circling
Around it, threatening, promising.
I tried to stopper my ears with
Music and catcalls. I tried to run
Out of its range but it followed me.
I tried to answer it with my own
Uncertain words, but it deafened me,
swallowed me, spat me out like Jonah
into the uncompromising concrete world.

Visit

My oldest friend is clear about his objective
To die within two weeks. His wife
Did it, he said, just closed in on herself
Shut her eyes and departed. In his mid-nineties,
he looks tired but good. Today he is wearing
Comfy clothes and bedroom slippers
In his lounge chair. Getting up he says
Is excruciating, and lying down, too,
And so he sits. We try to tempt him back
To the world with chocolates, ice-cream.
We look for his worn walker but he's had it
Put away. We talk of how things were
At the U in the forties, fifties, sixties
(When I came) seventies, when the others came.
He wants to leave, we want to keep him here.
We say again, Come on, old father,
Stay with us awhile, tell us your stories.

Beth Cortez-Neavel is a freelance writer, artist, journalist and multimedia guru living in Austin. She is currently working toward her Master's degree at the UT Graduate School of Journalism. Her recently self-published book of poetry "On Breathing & Long-Distance" is currently available at Bookwoman on North Lamar or online at Lulu.com. You can see more of her work online at www.bethcortez-neavel.com. Poems attached: All are from AIPF 2010.

December

And I looked up at the moon through the alley and the black fire escapes dripping
frozen from the last three days of rain
And you bent your neck down and hunched your shoulders your thin-soled cheap shoes
breaking at the ice left in puddles on the dirty caking tar
And it was night and we walked with your big steps and my bounces through frozen fall-leaf
fresh breaths and soft white lamplight
And the ducks swam upstream through the cold toward the bridge
where you kissed my nose because they thought we had food
And it was one a. m. in December and we could see the stars in Boston.

To Have and to Hold

I want to be there
in the past
to hold your hand
like you have held mine, father.

I want to be there that day
to tell you
you will not be like him
you will never be like him.

I want to whisper in your teenage ear
that you will raise with love
and discipline and art
three beautiful children.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

I want to be there,
holding your hand
as you tremble behind glass windows
of an old junk car
listening to your mother
say nothing
as he clutches her neck
screaming “*¡Voy a matarla!*
¡Voy a cortarla!”

Instead, father,
I am in the pew, watching,
as your stooped mother
tells your debilitated father
she will have him
with love
for another fifty years
as you read a blessing from the *Escritura Santa*
in a language you tried to forget long ago.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Neil Meili- Canadian poet. Winters in Austin. Attending AIPF since its second year. At 29 Chap Books still far behind his hero Thom the World Poet.

Directions to Los Novios Ranch

--For Claire and George

A hundred miles south of San Antone

Los Novios means The Sweethearts

They had Brahmas in the pasture

They had a gator in the pond

And big Blue Indigo snakes

to eat them pesky rattlers

before they bite the babies

Though mesquite may be as close

as you get to a sweetheart tree

the roadrunner on the woodpile

is all puffed up and singing

"Sweethearts, look at me"

Poem rejected in 2012 for the 2013 *Texas Poetry Calendar*

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Jim Parker is a lover of language, literature, life, laughter, and learning. He traveled south from Michigan many years ago to become a transplanted Texan, to meet and marry his best friend Ann, and to find his true calling as a teacher of young creative minds at St. Francis School. Other passions include cooking, Ultimate Frisbee, photography, yoga, dancing, jazz, reading, and hiking. Callooh callay! The following poems were rejected by the 2011 AIPF.

Making Me Truthful

“I will not stop staring at you until you stop this pickle and freckle nonsense.”
That is what she said, and her eyes drilled through me and she was thinking...

And I was thinking...

What goes on in the mind of an eight year old girl?
Too old really to believe, but young enough to play along

Young enough to decide to find a green marker
and create a display of green freckles caused by eating too many pickles.

Young enough to dance her way past all of us in the name of modeling
Old enough to tell me, “I don’t know you that well, but I don’t trust what you are saying.”

So what things can I tell you? Better yet, what can I say that is really true,
And if I do start telling the truth, will you believe me?
Do I deserve to be believed?

Girls much older than eight have believed my nonsense before
When intentions then were not to silly forth, but to sally forth

Besides, if you come out with hand-drawn freckles, isn’t what I said true?

Thoughts on a Morning Daily Cartoon

Staring at the blank rectangular word document
my mind meanders
glancing at the daily calendar cartoon

Simple really
No words,
a picture of Paul Bunyan eating a blue steak

Chuckling into tangential thought, I wonder

Did Babe anger Paul?
Are times just that tough?
Or was this his intention the whole time?

His face is drawn to look, what?
...ignorant of his actions?
...too coarse to care?
...or masking a deep seated hostility, a devious desire, an almost pathological hatred for
humanity, or worse, bovinity?

And is it really carnivorous callousness that concerns me,
Or is it a deeper fear that all legends, all stories of greatness, all tales of tall
end this way...
In acts of self-serving indifference as we eat our own so we can what

Survive?
Feel superior?
Protect ourselves?

Granted it wasn't, by definition, an act of cannibalism; maybe something more malicious...

Was the ox becoming too popular?
Too cute?
Was he going to upstage Paul and take away his storytime spotlight?

Just an unsuspecting Babe, serving as loyal friend

What does blue ox meat taste like anyway?
Is it leaner than beef?
Maybe more like bison?
How to cook...

Must stop.
My mind meanders.
Back to the writing of poetry.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Lillian Susan Thomas, raised in Lubbock, TX, has been a poet for more than 45 years, but only attempted getting published for a few months in 1979 (not having the stomach for rejection) and for the past few years. Therefore her publication list is short: in *River City Free Press* and in the *Trinity Review*; then more recently in *Bayou Review*, *Houston Poetry Fest 2011 Anthology* and AIPF's 2011 *Di-verse-city*. However her rejection list is long. I have listed rejections at the end of each poem; however, most have been revised at least once since the rejection.

Two Men on a Roof

Two men on a roof
work in silence,
shirts off,
coppering on that slant;
hammers aloft,
arms silhouette against the sun
for that momentary pause
before the arc, described,
powers homeward
on a pinpoint of steel.
Steady slamming beats nail-by-nail in place,
and tier-on-tier
progresses to the apex.
Then they stand,
swaying in the heat,
aglisten with their toil –
one foot on each half of the world they built
that slides away from that point
too close to heaven –
and descend to earth.

Rejected by New Ohio Review's 2011 Prize in Fiction & Poetry; 1980 Anthology for Poetry NOW; 1980 William and Mary Review

JuneBugs

For a long time they frightened my brothers, sisters and I.
If those stumbling fat beetles had a bite it would be vicious.
We measured their potency by the size of the insect:
Ants and mosquitoes mostly made us itch,
While the sting of bees and wasps could cause tears to flow.
And by that standard, these chafers had all the signs of killers.
How were we to know all that bumbling about,
Bumping into us was not testing their targets,
But simply poor navigation?
Finally when we saw no one was hurt,
We gave them the same deference we gave
To butterflies and lady bugs,
Dragonflies and doodle bugs.
One brother once observed they looked drunk
With their unsteady gait and faltering flight patterns.
We thought that was so funny
We started calling them the boozy beetles.

But we did not know what made them tipsy
Until I observed them one night
Through the door left ajar
To allow a fresh evening breeze
Clear the air of supper smells
As we cleared the table
And argued over who would wash dishes.

Kneeling on the screen in summer's heat
In adoration of the yellow bulb burning on the porch,
Those June bugs gathered
Drinking in the glow from the kitchen.

Rejected by Gulf Coast's 2012 Prize in Poetry; Houston Poetry Festival Anthology 2011.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

John Berry, Master Poet, is one of the founders of AIPF and is known as “the man in yellow.” He wrote this poem after having his poems rejected for a Houston literary magazine.

For a Second Assistant Vice Sub-editor of a Third-rate Literary Magazine

Few musicians have perfect ears, but yours are tin.
Each time you taste the soup, you put salt in.
Few painter’s eyes are perfect, but yours are glass.
Few horses are thoroughbred, but you’re an ass.

True bards, despite what pedagogues averred,
knew there is always only one right word
and chose repose or drama as designed,
for we are making Magick in the mind.

The verse you like skims minds like skipping stone
and lasts no longer than the circlets sown.
Real poetry is never done by half
and stirs the mind like seas where glaciers calf.

Deceiving eye and brain, the bergs fall slow
as, massy past our grasp, they plunge below
and, mute by distance, slip beneath the sea
with splash so small we doubt reality.

But then so large we almost look away
the deep erupts a hundred feet of spray.
The surges calm, the poem-berg floats bright
and glints and gleams, nine-tenths beyond our sight.

Few folk are numb as you, unless they’re drunk.
Whenever you buy perfume, it smells like skunk.
Always your clothes have style, but never fit.
And you wouldn’t know a poem if it bit.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Marc Carver If I do nothing else in life i hope that when people read my poetry they think to themselves, "This guy was really a poet and did not preach one thing and live another."

That Boy is a Retard

I feel rejected
I feel that no one
understands me.
I am without a friend
and without a circle to call my own.
People jeer at me when i get on stage
and throw cabbages
and almost every kind of forgotten exotic fruit.
Yes i am rejected
and you know the greatest thing
I love it.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Darla McBryde is a West Texas poet living with the love of her life and two clever cats in Houston. She survives the city by taking road trips to lands of blue sky and red earth. She boasts that her poems have been rejected by some of the best journals out there, and she has been fortunate to actually have poems recently accepted by some excellent publications such as 200 New Mexico Poems Anthology, Big River Poetry Review, Illya's Honey, AIPF's DiVerseCity, Crack the Spine, Cinizo Journal and Gutter Eloquence. She is quite pleased to be included in such a cool eclectic collection celebrating and embracing REJECTION !

Gulf Coast Poem

sand in my shoes
sand in my sheets
blues drowned moon
pours pale across the water
my vampire muse infused
lusty and ripe with poet blood
spreads my poems open like oysters
Sargasso brushed thighs
sea liquor pearls
salt air innuendo
inviting
read
me.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Sylvia Benini - Human Being Activist

Rachel Corrie

Rachel sat with Families,
Listened as they told their SheStories and BeStories....

Witnessed, with her own EYES
Learned that standing UP.... matters....

Sacrificed in a moment
Unhesitantly
Her Life and Future.....

They crushed her Body....

But, not her SPIRIT.

We honor that Sacrifice,
Daily,
In Speaking OUT
and UP
For those, whose Voices are Unheard.

Elneta Owens I have dabbled in poetry since high school but never got serious about it until after I took a Creative Writing course at ACC last year. With time on my hands during retirement I now am able to concentrate a little more on writing. I have never presented anything for publication except to the APS but hope to get even more serious about publication shortly. Each poem was rejected at the APS Annual Awards in May of this year.

Testy Little One

A little boy on the playground
 falls flat on his face without a sound.
Immediately his mom runs over
 to find him in a bed of clover.
She is afraid he has hit his head,
 but doesn't see whether he has bled.
Rather than wait for the EMT
 she speeds off to the Emergency.
The doc at the hospital first said,
 "I'll take a look at this boy's head."
He then said, "Lady, jump for joy.
 " I see nothing wrong with this boy."

The boy is very much alarmed
 because he contends he is harmed.
He asks that they send him the head nurse
 and tries to convince her he is worse.
She looks once more and finds no lesions,
 cannot figure out any reasons
why the boy still insists he's sick.
Is he trying to pull some such trick
 as to get out of a dreaded chore.
But he has never done this before!
She turns to the mom and winks her eye,
 shrugs her shoulders, and lets out a sigh.

Mom then remembers school the next day
 and wonders why her son acts this way,

Her wonder is just for a short while;
 an idea comes and then a smile.
She will take him home to get some rest
 and insist he study for his test.
This is not what he thought he would get.
 Does he dare kick up a fuss and fret.
For sure his mom is smarter than he;
 right through him his antics she can see.
Cry will be the ultimate sorrow
 if he fails his Math test tomorrow.

Still in My Heart

This heart of mine is actually a house
 with many rooms.
Veins form a roadmap to this house,
 a direct approach to happiness.
One day, all alone, you wandered in
 and I gladly welcomed you.
We roamed around from room to room,
 sipped cool drinks in the evening.
You have lingered for quite some time;
 even your death did not expulse you.
When this ole heart stops,
 the house disintegrates.
Only then will an artery channel you
 into the abyss.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Ken Jones has published hundreds of poems but had even more REJECTED in his poetry career. He loves the idea of this anthology and encourages all writers to never take rejection personally and follow your own muse no matter the reaction. You can learn more about his art at his website www.poetken.com

The Sacred Wound

The Sacred Wound is wound around my soul
A healing helix burned within its form
Part of us must die to then feel whole
A spirit expire to truly mold a soul.

We each build battlements within reach
High above our psyche's thinning membrane
Praying arrows from without will never breach
That wall we call our shield against the pain.

When my brother beat my mother, I watched
An episode which sourced my inner scar
When my girlfriend slept with skinheads, I touched
The reemergent strain of ancient bars

These hurts make sense if only we allow
Annihilated soul to reappear
And in that hollow spot to know somehow
The door to spirit power is through the fear

Throw off the curtains, bandages and shawls
So grief can weave its universal pattern
You will see how you and it are all
Through this Sacred Wound you soon will learn.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

David Knape - Member and former President, Mockingbird Poetry Society, McKinney, TX.
Member and board member, Poetry Society of Texas.

Peekaboo Moon

Peekaboo moon
round as a spoon
sneaks around corners
whistling a tune
hides behind houses
dark in the night
creeps down lonely roads
carrying its light
peeks around chimneys
winks from afar
pokes its head into clouds
covering the stars
peekaboo moon
playing games with a grin
give us a smile
when you come out again.

Christine Irving thinks of her poems as snapshots – small sharply focused moments that tell a tale in just a few essential words. She is eclectic in taste, desire and thought. Though she loves reading and writing, as a triple Leo she prefers her poetry spoken aloud.

Rain on the Towpath (rejected by Calyx 2001)

When it rains on the path
an impermeable layer of clay
refusing penetration, forces
water to pool on the surface
splashing carmine on boots, pant legs
and black-furred underbellies
making walking treacherous for humans.

When it freezes, the red slip rises
stands on little frost feet -
pillars of ice delicate
as glass filaments, hand-blown
around a Christmas star;
a frozen crust not strong enough
for dogs whose four feet crash
craters through the brittle reef.

Some hearts are like the path –
red, slippery, moist
awash with sentiment
but repelling soaking rain;
raising feeble shields that shatter at first blow
masking their adamantite layer
beneath thin sheaths of emotion,
making loving treacherous
for humans.

Michael D. Knight - "Mike D" is a well-loved local poet who has an unusual presentation style. His subject matter is sometimes controversial and always in-step with the thoughts and feelings of this younger generation. He has a wry humor and is insightful in a no-nonsense way.

Return to Me

When I was a little child...
I saw two sets of footprints in the sand
One was of my mother's
Walking as she held me in her arms
The other set of footprints were yours supposedly
Making sure she raised me right
As long as I saw those two set of footprints in the sand
I felt so safe
And expected everything to be alright
There were times when life was hard
I only saw one sets of footprints in the sand
But those footprints were too large
To be my mother's
So I assumed they were yours
Carrying my mother in your arms
As she carried me in her arms
Year by year, I grew older
And I learned how to walk on my own
You walked by my side for a while
Then all of a sudden
I found out that I was alone
At first I thought it was you
Carrying me through the hard times
But what about the good times
How come you couldn't party with me then
Well I guess it was just me all along...
All alone...
People often tell me
You only look after children and fools
Unfortunately I was neither one
Sorry I couldn't live up to your expectations
But life was too demanding for me to be a child
And life was too hard for me to be foolish

What was I to do
When I was young
Your presence felt so warm and inviting
Now your absence feels so desolate and cold
I tried different channels to get back in touch with you
I would go to church so I can talk to you there
But I couldn't hear you above the voice of the preacher and
 the choir
I am nice to people
Because they say I have a good heart
But the preacher man says
That good deeds just aren't enough
He tells me I should believe in the only begotten Son
And that He died for my sins
But it's too hard for me to believe that
First of all I don't believe in death
I believe in change
We don't die
We only change physical forms
I believe your "Son" was not sent to earth to die
I believe he was sent to earth to show us how to conquer
 death
Yet I feel like I'm alone in my beliefs
Yeah alone...
And in that loneliness I found out
What "ignorance is bliss" really meant
I was too smart for my own good
And my skeptical mind is what separated us
Everything had to be proven
Blind faith just wasn't my cup of tea
Until one day I meditated by a tree
And You entered my soul temporary
I wished for that feeling to last for eternity
So I will sit by this tree, and pray, and hope
Patiently waiting for the day
You will return to me

Ann Howells serves on the board of Dallas Poets Community, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit and has edited its journal, *Illya's Honey*, for fourteen years. Her chapbook, *Black Crow in Flight*, was published by Main Street Rag (2007). She has been nominated twice for a Pushcart and once for a Best of the Net. Her work has recently appeared in *Borderlands*, *Calyx*, *Cenizo*, *RiverSedge*, *Third Wednesday* and *Five Poetry Journal* (Australia).

Phantasma

There! On the stairs a glimpse of skirt.
No one. From a distant room:
inflection, pattern of speech, fly
down the hall—find a wobbly fan,
crackling fluorescents. But, still,
that recurring dream, slow skin-chill
at small of back. Hairs prickle.

It is, perhaps, the vanished twin
who surrendered gracefully *en utero*,
bone and corpuscle absorbed. She
grew in Mother's mind (belly fat
with my round, pink flesh): a slender girl,
auburn hair held fast in white silk bow,
youngest judge on the federal bench.

I hear her quiet step at the back door,
beyond vision—trace of mist,
shoulder high, like billowing silk.
Subdued tinkle, ice cubes swirled
or quiet laughter. Sudden strong scent:
attar of roses.

I turn to the window, but night has come
and with it rain. My face peers back
through weeping glass. Beyond my shoulder,
indistinct, another face crinkles with laughter.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

San Antonio

sizzles in the heat
in the pan
cilantro & chilies
dance
salsa
rat-a-tat flourish
 rapidfire spanglish
cervesa & sweet tea
votives & *luminaria*
river bent double
 at its liquid heart
night-blooming
 jasmine purple pink
 that curious blue-green
 believed to repel devils
catholicism & *santaria*
grackles & *touristas*
 eating the worm

Yolanda López - discovered her passion for writing poetry and short story as a young girl. Her work emerged in her recent participation at the 2011 National Novel Writing Month, South Texas College's Tierra Firme and Interstice publications and VIPF: Boundless 2012.

Come Back to Me

The music lingers in the background,
every melody reminding me of you.
I cannot shake the feeling that without you,
I no longer live, only exist.

Come back to me!

My eyes seek your face in the night.
My ears strive to hear the laughter in your voice.
My mouth longs to taste the bittersweet of your skin.
Every pore on my flesh screams your name!
Come back to me!

A Fine Mess

We are A Fine Mess
an oxymoron of emotions
You and I
We were Almost Done
And we couldn't keep away

Sinfully Good
Relative Truth
Once Again

Accidentally on Purpose
You touched my arm and it was over
Absolutely Unsure

And we've Agreed to Disagree
That we're more than just friends
We are Clearly Confused
For this is A Deliberate Mistake

Expect the Unexpected
We will be in each other's lives forever
Screaming in Silence

A Real Fantasy
So Strangely Familiar

Final Conclusion is
My love for you lays
Beyond Infinity

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Christine Gilbert was on the production staff of *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* for numerous issues until she resigned to concentrate on her interest in art. She is a member of the Austin Poetry Society and the Austin Writer's League poetry critique group. She is the artist designing placards for the Austin Poetry Society's Poetry With Wheels project with Capital Metro.

Cut Outs

Set the bombs off.

Never jam them or pump vigorously.
Inside rotting stumps, dramatic scenes
of life and death are played out every day.
Myriads of intelligences **avoid** survival.
We are no different.
Or, believe in the importance of aligning things with the sun.
All in a fraction of a second
some worlds at least end with a bang, not a whimper.
Extinct coiled shells know
we escape by importing new theory.
Think about dinosaurs and start caring.
Bangs and whimpers have such divergent consequences.
Life is short and the world is immense.
All protection of life lies behind us, like the sun.
We're a race of fools, lunatics, and insurance salesmen.
Optimism is very **big** these days. Invest.

Wing tips, high tops, sandals, Hush Puppies:
As long as people have feet, they'll need shoes.

AIPF 2008 Reject

Upon Listening to Readings from Ulysses by James Joyce

Yes, pity I never tried to read that novel but I have listened to audio tapes of Ulysses at least four times over. Gradually getting the gist of the whole story, laughing aloud at Bloom and the Citizen and Bloom and Gerty—that postcard with “U. p: up” and by-gob guffawing at Bloom’s assertion, “God was a Jew, Christ was a Jew like me,” and the Citizen crying “By Jesus, I’ll brain that Jew man for using the holy name. By Jesus I’ll crucify him so I will.” The bloody tin box clattering down the street, the old mongrel, Garryowen, after the car like bloody hell. All the people paralyzed with laughing, “as good as any play in the Queen’s royal theater.” Yes! And if you picked a flower from the garden and said to Joyce “Look, a bloom,” that myriad-minded man would talk about it for an hour and talk steady too. Sherlock-holmsing with his pistols, stamens, fertilizers, florists, whys, wheres and howevers—all the gibberish and jabber, the streams of glaucous brain-tipped, creamy, dreamy codology and articulations that flabbergast and combobulate. Yes! It’s easier to listen to somebody reading sections of it with an Irish accent; easier to grasp the story, which is a good one, and skip over the requiescats and theological, philological, mingo-minxi etceteras. Yes! And especially the last chapter, which takes you inside Molly’s head—if any man wants to know the fickle conniving and manipulating machinations that go through women’s heads, all they need to do is read that chapter with the bloody thing coming on and the chamber and the other thing pounding away like a piston. Yes! And it’d be much better if the world were ruled by women. You don’t see them going around killing and raping and slaughtering each other, now do you? They’re just plotting and planning and filling the whole place with roses and children, and, yes, it has changed me even if I don’t understand every particular. I hear my own thoughts cataloging every second but not the way his did. Yes, I understand enough to know I’m glad my brain doesn’t work that way with his jawbreakers and this phenomenon and the other phenomenon. Today we’d probably say he had a hyperactive brain and attention deficit disorder, put him on medications so he’d never have finished that bloody book—but some say he never did....

Glynn Monroe Irby, while having suffered several rejections throughout his career, now resides triumphantly in an historical county near the great Gulf of Mexico along the southern coastal Outback of Texas.

The Pine Avenue Bridge Incident

We heard the story often in August, usually told
by one of the floppy-hat-wearing elders
as they rested in aluminum loungers
on the wooden pier, while we younger-ones
treaded the briny water of the Old Brazos River.

The story was, one day in a rage,
Mr. Piñon ran his red cedar speedboat
right-up under the low-lying fishing wharf
and straight into the creosoted pilings
below the Pine Avenue Bridge.

"It was an awful accident," they would say
shaking their heads from side-to-side.
And though the crash didn't kill Mr. Piñon,
it did take the top right out of his brain
and apparently he was never quite the same.

The elders always told this story loud enough
for all the kids to hear and then swim clear
of getting under that very same fishing wharf.
Then they'd turn aside and whisper
the rest of the story to other elders nearby.

Once, I was close enough to catch the whispers
as they described how Pinion's wife had later "turned
to drinkin' and carryin' on with other men." I suppose for us,
they thought hearing about the wife was worse
than hearing about how he'd lost a part of his head.

I never knew what became of Mr. and Mrs. Piñon.
Still, I enjoyed swimming beside -- and under -- that pier.
And after gaining a few years, I crossed over the river
to the far shore in a red cedar-ply sailboat
we made in Grandpa's shop one salty summer.

The Queue

I stand in a line of those that equate
the spoken word with music to the ear.
It's true, to really understand,
poetry must be voiced aloud
instead of merely read.

As it's also true,
music must be played or heard,
rather than perused quietly
from its printed page.

I'm one for all the muses,
as are you, when we come
to see the differences
between instrumental lyric
and the lyric of poetry.

Each extends into experience,
yet may seem allusive.
Each extends intuition,
yet may appear opaque.

Ultimately, though, when I stand
at the head of this timely line --
I trust my song of heightened speech
may directly merge into a chorus
of the Universal Oratorio.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Debbie Cano (AKA HotTamale) Writing poetry for 20+ years, Hot Tamale made her Open Mic debut at Kick Butt coffee in 2010. Less than a year later, she joined Spoken and Heard as one of its hosts. She continues to write and work with other poets.

Poetry Painting

Words are my brushstrokes.
Expressions are my paint -
The Red Light District of my mind-
I'm expressly not a saint.
Landscapes are paragraphs flowing so smooth-
A treacherous thought, the paint ceases to move.
Writing in oils feels profound; Watercolors less so for voice-
A pencil drawing of verse is my vehicle of choice.
Let the others word-process, text-type and iPad.
Writing until my hand cramps keeps me from going mad.
Enough of the poetry. Enough of the rhyme.
"Does she think like this ALL OF THE TIME?"
Poetry, prose, observational thought
Out of my hands are thrust - the energy sought
My journal entries becoming less and less,
Scribbled verse in notebooks is what I like the best.
Anger, ecstasy, giddy glee: these are the feelings that come out of me.
Don't take a pill. Pass on that drink. Pick up a notebook and think...THINK!
The voices are quiet during the day, but in the Dead of Night - THEY COME OUT TO PLAY-
"Do it, do it - here's a pen! Get it all out and You will be ZEN"
No chance of that I think too goddamn much - so much they thought I was "touched"
Middle kid, "Hey Look at Me! I'm There ! I'm Here!" No one Saw -Oh dear...
So out come the notebooks, it's a compulsion to fill them up.
Let me finish this thought - and maybe - well...hmmm...

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Anyah Dishon of Dripping Springs, TX, has been published in San Angelo, Houston, and Austin, Texas. She is a musician & poet featured in venues in and around Austin, Texas. She hosted Diverse City Music and Poetry at Casa de Luz which aired on her Channel Austin TV Show, NIGHT WAVES. She currently edited a candid documentary film called *Wisdom of the Wayshowers...New Paths to the Future* & is producing a Video Documentary *Universalis Poet-Tree* for SXSW 2013 film festival featuring local poets & musicians, & the venues that promote poetry.

Infusion of a New Paradigm

This is the infusion of New Blood,
a New Paradigm, and a brand New NOW
and as we shift to this newness, fragments cannot exist.
No more jagged-edged mirrored reflections.
Our visors are thrown and we propel forward
no matter what we see or what we might scoff.
To the left and to the right and in front and in back,
it is all here NOW without end.
Looking up for the first time, with new sight and new Light,
we see who are our new friends.
Everything is becoming and we know we are
Thought-form in motion and consciousness is a
matter of fact alive and illumined in no time and no space.
The new paradigm where one understands all things
and all things understand the one
and there is release because "it is what it is."
What now can be done is to choose a new perception,
Choose a new paintbrush, and a new medium.
Lift a new rock, touch a new soul,
Oh we belong with one another here and beyond the sun.
Who now is in front of our new eyes;
what is this new tune?
We've turned a new direction, received a new signal
From the moon for a new way of thriving...together.
There is a smell of newness

Of no more strife in our longing to belong,
Strange at first it may seem and unclear

But the strange becomes norm as allowing becomes the new form
and the level of eternity we tap into is...

ALL TOGETHER our brand new as WE allow
and move, honoring the allowing more than the resistance

That dwells in the "you"

and we realize resistance was billions of light years ago
when things were made from it

and so now in this new creation, this new breath

things are made from

the pendulum at rest that breathes LIFE,

The pendulum still as before anything was,

and free...free from resistance.

We lay down our arms, in the new paradigm of Peace.

I Don't Know Why I Ever Loved You

I'm sitt'in in the chair where you once sat
But, I'm not giv'in a thought to where you're at
Or how you are or what you do.
I don't know why I ever loved you.

I've got my friends, got my car,
Found your stash of canned figs in a jar.
Not much left to hold on to and
I don't know why I ever loved you.

And the lights are on in the house all night.
There is silence in the air now, and there's no more fight.
No anger entity com'in through the mirror
And no more reflections of a holy furor...
stare'in at me.

I've fought my own battles, I made in my life
And somehow I won them all it was worth the strife.
Not much left now to clean up or do
And I really don't know why I ever loved you.

A white knight in shining armor they say doesn't exist
A dark knight with a sword and an angry fist
Seems more feasible from what I went through
And I really don't know why I ever loved you.

And this old chair where you used to sit
Is my throne now, yes, now I've claimed it.
I'm not cry'in at night, from be'in black and blue
And I really don't know why I ever loved you.

Lovin' you was like lov'in a ghost
So, I raise my glass and give myself a toast
To life, to livin' and to being to myself true
And I really don't know why I ever loved you.

I'm sittin' in the chair where you once sat
But, I'm not givin' a thought to where you're at
Or how you are or what you do
But I do wonder sometimes, why I ever loved you.

John Milkereit is a Rotating Equipment Engineer at a Houston engineering firm. His first two chapbooks, *Paying Admissions*, and *Home & Away* were published by Pudding House in 2010. The poem *Mexico* was rejected by AIPF in 2010, *Rotating Equipment Engineer* was rejected by AIPF in 2011.

Mexico

Quiet clouds are troubadours
dancing above when I've played
against her greenhouse, a one-man banjo
band far along in the agave. Lifted past
hot-springed pools, the spray of bougainvillea,
punched-in lanterns, piñatas, and German cafés,
our mural of lips have met and parted,
we are skeletons again.

Rotating Equipment Engineer

A rotating equipment engineer ought to land in a poem
because I love the surprise of him
entering a dimly-lit hallway
with his sack lunch
ready to say *no* to someone.

I enjoy his negating self, his *I-don't-build-anything*
kind of job description.
What he actually does is a mystery.
One morning, his glasses could reflect from a computer screen
a motor data sheet or the news that a volcano erupted in Indonesia—

you would never know for sure. I'd want as many turns
in the poem as the pumps he specifies. Words and shafts
are traitors and dirty when the start button is pressed.
Parts spin out of control, taking limbs off their operators.
I reminisce about the days when he made more money

than a doctor, when building factories was a revolution.
His metal is so much like the sentence that takes so long
to get poured, and welded, and bolted into its shape.
Why not turn the result
over to the rulers of the world?

With a red pen mounted on his keyboard, he always waits,
ready to reject a test.
He can fly to a factory in a pair of steel-toed boots
to witness what is ready to ship. No matter what he calculates,
or whatever tools are hidden in his pocket, he is never finished.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Nicholas Dorosheff - I think this one has been rejected numerous times, but poems are like our children, they're always welcomed home.

So I stand in evening glow and
lift my hand to touch the eyelash
moon, and feel the curve of promised
gaze, like scimitar of old it slices down
and draws an arc upon my soul.

The New Moon

An eyelash slip of new moonness
Lies at dusk in Eve's caress.
No silver, gold or silken thread
Holds her on celestial bed,
While fading rays from sun reflect
A playful, coy and shy aspect.

She promises her love to me,
Yet soon departs in fleeting tease.
Each night she comes on higher sky
To tempt me with her opening eye
And peeks at me with lingering glance
Inviting me to join her dance.

If only I could lose my way
To leave this place and with her stay
And know in her my yearning's end,
Then never more would I pretend
That love is something to be found
In other places scattered 'round.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Jan Benson, a Community Poet residing in Fort Worth, TX, is a member of the Fort Worth Haiku Society and Emblematic Poetry Society. She has been previously published in several anthologies. Ms. Benson is an advocate of Written and Emblematic poetry, as well as Spoken Word.

The Coffee House Order

Serve me up a metaphor
dark roast; add brandied simile
cap it with alliteration cream
served hot, with no ellipsis

My friend would like a couplet
no, a singlet of espresso
sprinkled with cinnamon imagery
but with savor of Pindaric ode

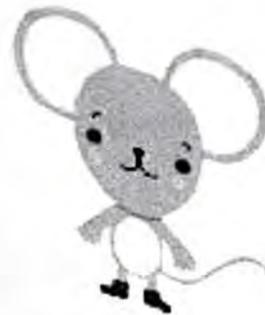
We'll share a pastry ballad
with chocolate chiasmus running through
thick-cut; served on canto china
and two forks from Limerick, too

We have our pen and paper
our fertile thoughts and dreams
and plan to sit here sipping
'til we find hyperbole

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.



The field
mouse runs the meadow
green - to skitter, play and forage
the scene - Plays the day under April's
sun - scampering the pasture at cow's hooves for
fun. Hiding in holes the ground hog has made - tagging
the butterflies when they go on parade - Taking cool shade in the heat
of the day - within kudzu, wisteria, honeysuckle or hay - On days that the sky
fills with green clouds and gray - mouse runs to toadstool for safety, and stays
- I ponder the genius of nature's grand scheme - protection for critters seen
and unseen - While I have to purchase a mechanical
device - to shelter myself from rain
and ice.



The Field Mouse by Jan Benson

Bridh Hancock - I am a writer, poet and performer from Victoria, Australia. When my *A Funtastically Fantabulous Fairy Book* is published then I can afford to get much else self-published that will be professionally edited and so will be excellently excellent; you betcha. Perfection is an obsession of mine, and why not?

Khymer Love Lyrics

[unpublished : 61L]

The Khymer Rouge, the Khymer Rouge
The pride of Kampuchea,
Held by us and all the world
With love and a little fear.

It's a man's life in the Khymer Rouge,
And Khymer Redmen love it.
Uncle Sam is our stooge,
So up-yours you can shove it.

No-one is completely bad.
There's always yin in yang.
Pol Pot really loves his men
With a turn-around, bend-over, bang!

The Khymer Rouge are Greenies, all.
Let the jungles grow.
Lovely jungle everywhere,
Except where poppies blow.

We love your gifts of bullets and bombs,
But what delights our eyes
Are the latest computer videos and games.
Deep down we're real fun guys.

The Australian bush was pacified
With loving gifts of poisoned flour.
Our malcontents we simply starve.
It's cheaper by the hour.

The fewer the children the greater the share
Of love each child holds dear.
It is for love, for love alone,
We depopulate Campochia.

Ghengis Khan and Chairman Mao
Taught us well and taught us how
To love the blood we set so free,
Then shyly smile and bow.

The sea's a mighty source of food,
But who will feed the fishes?
Ideologically unsound friends,
Who love their Pol Pot's wishes.

Return all ye who have gone abroad
For fear, to trade or to study.
Our love for you will leave you out
In fields all brown and bloody.

The Khymer Rouge are holy men;
The Warrior Priests of Dhamma.
It is our thankless lot in life
To administer heavy karma,
But, oh! if we should have our way,
Campochia would be grand;
From Phanom Dang to Vietnam,
It would be a Disneyland.

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Travis Blair lives down the road from the University of Texas campus in Arlington. He is author of *Train to Chihuahua*, a collection of poems about his adventures in Mexico. His work also appears in *Red River Review*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red Fez*, and various other literary journals. He currently serves as President of the Dallas Poets Community and is a member of the Writers League of Texas.

Two Buttons Undone

(rejected by San Pedro River Review, July 2012)

The waitress
at the Waffle House,
red hair piled high,
her neck long
and lovely as a swan,

calls me *Hun*
when she brings
a mug of coffee
to my table
at a quarter till three.

A touchy-feely
kind of woman
with two buttons

undone, shows
a glimpse of cleavage

when she smiles.
She puts a little
extra cream in my
coffee and some extra
swing in her hips

when she walks away.
I watch her strut
and I wonder
if her cherry
pie tastes good.

The Queen's English

(rejected by Zygote in My Coffee, Spring 2008)

First time I saw her
lingering over a poem
she looked like a proper
verb filled with sexual
repression & participles
that had never dangled
in public view
I was shocked
when she asked me
to come up to her room
& dance in iambic
pentameters
to conjugate the moon
in first person
She was an action verb
full of adjectives
a run-on sentence
without punctuation
a paragraph with
long slender sexy
clauses
but man!
she spoke the language!

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Rod C. Stryker began his writing career at 15. His current book, *Exploits of a Sun Poet* (Pecan Grove Press, February 2003), was awarded the San Antonio Barnes and Noble/Bookstop Author-of-the-Month, February 2003 and also the San Antonio Current Best Book of 2004. Rod began the *Sun Poetic Times* literary-visual arts magazine in 1994, founded the Sun Poet's Society in 1995 and co-founded the Sun Arts Foundation 2004. The Sun Poet's Society is known today around the world. Rod was nominated for the San Antonio Poet Laureate and he's currently working on his next collection of poetry and art photography, *Lucid Affairs*.

Death's Prayer

"And in the end, we prayed for death – Judy Reeves"

And in the beginning
Death prays for us,
drops a spark of insight
in our infant dreams,
pulls all-night vigils
praying we make it
to see the dawn,
a birthday,
a lifetime
measured in centuries,
not decades.

The Dark Angel tumbles
right along side,
a shadow we ignore
until tragedy
or some random
accident reminds us
of mortal coils
and fragile lives
sluiced between
streams of bills
and taxes.

In the end,
the Reaper
stops praying
long enough to collect
our tattered souls
as She ponders
the next spark
will put Her
out of a job.

Songs

My goddess of song is
a terrified angel
who blots out my eyes
but whispers truth
beached against
the sea.

Gulls cry and sway
at stilted shambling
as I feel
for a purchase
of grass or soil,
anything but
grains of sand
bleeding between fingers.

It's then the angel
asks if I'm a god,

"to create is to breathe is to live"
I counter,
and fall into
the cruel surf,

laugh through the pain
of nascent vistas
in one breath
and blinding light
the next.

I climb out of
the healing tide,
avert Death's gaze,

alive in my

Cantos.

Kathryn Lane is a newlywed to poetry after falling in love with the intimacy of poems during a poetry reading at Texas A&M in November 2011. She has a diverse background in finance, international travels, and fiction writing and is already a successfully published poet. She has a book coming out in October 2012, *A Conversation on India – Through Photography and Poetry* featuring her poems and photography of Brenda Gottlieb.

Rabbit

When I look at the moon, especially a full moon,
I see, as my ancestors did, a Rabbit up there—
a Rabbit standing up lazily filling folklore tales
of Aztec gods and a Mayan princess. Yet Rabbit
was a multicultural spirit who rode a Crane
to the moon, in Native American lore, where he
can still be seen, especially by Chinese people who
see him pounding precious herbs for immortals.
An ancient Buddhist poem tells of Rabbit throwing
himself on a fire to feed an old beggar man,
who is Sákra, lord of devas, in disguise.
Sákra saves Rabbit and draws him
on the face of the moon — a Rabbit
I can see on clear nights blessed with a full moon.

Mayombé

Brazil, Brazil, Brazil . . .
Your harmonious beat
Becomes pure syncopation
In the high noon heat

Mayombé-bombé-mayombé
Your Afro-Caribbean chant
Evokes ritualistic killing of a snake
The hypnotic chanting, almost a rant

Sensemaya, sensemayá—sacrificing the snake
Still practiced in Salvador, Bahía
Ancient rituals to the African-Brazilians
Sacred like the Christian *Ave María*

You are accepted. All poems are needed and all voices deserve to be heard.

Kelly Ann Ellis lives, writes, works, and plays in Houston, TX. She teaches at several colleges where she is a lowly adjunct, aka poet. Although published occasionally, she secretly relishes in rejection (more fodder for the poetry patch). She can frequently be found at coffee, wine, and music venues chewing her pencil to the nub and working on soggy, mascara-stained poems. Kelly hopes you like her rejected poems, or at least read them, or maybe hate the poems but think she's attractive, or perhaps just a nice person--or noticeable, somewhat, at least not obtrusive--she'll settle for that.

Mind Matters

When I was younger I believed,
there was a party somewhere,
and hell-bent, I was convinced
I could get there regardless
my gauge said otherwise.

I have been known
to leave my stranded wheels,
take off my strapless patent
heels, thumb a ride. Known to climb
inside with some hapless hillbilly trucker
who, throttling down, has pulled on over
to ask where was I going and
did I *wanna get high?*

It gets harder now I'm older
to just park it on the shoulder, to walk off
dead of winter when the broke-down wreck
I'm driving up-and-stalls. Harder still to just get
going to some party full-well knowing , it's
a long night-drive to nothing
in a really empty ride.

Robert Allen hails from San Antonio, Texas, is a former librarian, former small-business secretary, former caregiver, and former crew leader for the United States Census Bureau. He has volunteered for *Gemini Ink*, San Antonio's premier literary arts organization, and he sometimes reads on open-mic night for Rod C. Stryker's Sun Poets Society. This poem was rejected by the San Antonio Poetry Fair in 2010, and by *Voices de La Luna* (San Antonio) in 2011.

Thinking it Safe to Go Out, I Go Out

into my backyard
with a jar full of sunflower
seeds. Lifting down the feeder from its hook, I
stop but cannot see. Beyond the
wall of trees and across the drainage ditch that
is our alley someone starts a
car. The ignition catches; the engine roars to life.
Metal scrapes against metal when I
replace the feeder on its hook. I stop, again.
A single bird chirps slowly. Our
AC unit growls constantly. Another bird chirps, this one
more insistent, louder. Our cat rustles
through a layer of dead leaves. Somewhere a dog
barks, twice. A second dog, deep-voiced,
bigger, barks many times. I turn to go back
into the house while the constant
hum continues at a higher pitch. A different bird
calls, from high overhead—twice, then
pausing, then twice again—this call a gravelly kind
of rasp. I have to stop.
Tiny birds, faintly peeping, are all around, all unseen.
The humming air conditioner intrudes again.
There it is. I hear it now. That sound.
That panoply of sounds I ignore
at my peril: a deadly quiet suburban Sunday morning.
Thinking it safe to go out,
I go out

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Shae O'Brien grew up in the Pacific Northwest, and it has bred her to have a love for music, coffee, the ocean, and rain. Along with writing, she is a teacher. Her writing has been featured in publications such as *Off The Wookie* and *Harbinger Asylum*. Her writing has also been rejected by a variety of affluent publications, including AIPF and her high school newspaper. You may find her on any given night writing or performing her work around Austin, TX.

Selective Listening

Oh I hope you do not hear the news in there
The fear and worry, let it not seep through my skin
 Into your gentle growing heart
For it will do you no good, not now or ever.
 Instead listen only to my beating heart
 Teaching you the rhythm of love
 To which the world dances
 Listen to your father's laughter
 The notes of joy will carry you
Through many years and adventures
 Listen to the words read aloud
 From novels and poems and plays
 Learn to use them and your own
For you my dear will change the world.
 And if you do indeed hear the news
 Let it inspire that change within you
 For your life, our lives, our world.

The Color of Woman

i pray that you are a boy.
scruffy knees, high top shoes,
never a day of
"why don't you like pink?"
"why don't you wear dresses?"
"why don't you speak quieter...
...like a good girl should."
and i wonder if my prayers are like poison
or if my fears are coating you like warpaint
preparing for the battle we have fought before you.
yes time has passed since my mother coated me
yet the color of woman still streaks my face.
and do not ever question the world sees it.
perhaps wishful thinking would bring you bliss
and a naive heart shut would save your innocence
but when i produce the greatest miracle of our earth
they will still cover your beautiful being with a pink cap--
even one minute old you will know your place.
and i imagine when we bring you home
and that first night begins
with a soft wail, then a loud one
and your father tries to shush you
i will press my finger to his lips and tell him
no man will tell our daughter not to speak
whether for milk or justice
against wet diapers or atrocities
seeking comfort or equal rights
instead i will hold you in the cradle of my arm
and sing softly,
"we shall overcome. we shall overcome...
...we shall overcome some day."

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Claire Vogel Camargo began writing poetry six years ago, and appreciates the learning and encouragement from poet friends. She had a nursing education and career; now has an ice sculpture business with her husband in Austin, TX.

Blood Meal

His dread mounts
beneath the fluorescent moon,
knowing he will soon feel
the vampire's bite.

As a fang sinks into his vein,
he sees his life flow away -
red spurts into glass tubes -
and feels faint.

The nurse calmly smiles
in satisfaction at the
blood draw, and
removes the needle.

Lost In Thought --I have been co-hosting at Kick Butt for a little over a year and I've been a part of the open-mic scene in Austin since I moved here in 2006. The first spot I ever stepped foot in to do poetry was The Hideout. I was pretty sad to see it go. And now, I love nothing more than sharing the stage with not only my fellow co-hosts, but all the talent and artistic people this town has.

He Has a Proposition for Me

It's a pin prick,
A rusted vine with vicious thorns
And delicate pearl leaves,
Fumes of painful dust
That coagulates the air rhythm with this aged yellow,
Binding the pages stuck together clasping my opened heart,
And pump,
Pump,
Pumping these memories that have yet to happen,
Painting them with such dedication,
Only a mind
That finds the here and now terrifying and restless
Can create,

Wood chips splinter off
From the jagged edges of my fingernails
As I fight to crawl into the present,
But I can't get past the spell of his face.
A stranger with possibilities
Is so dangerous to a young man
Who thinks that everything is possible,
And these flecks of tree trunk
Fuck themselves into extinction
Until their exasperated skin explodes
Like cinnamon-brown fireworks
Circling themselves
And extend their needing for infinite lust
Into four legs standing up.

Across this improvised table
Sits the dealer,
His white suit glowing in a lost darkness,
The skin of his fabric made shaken and collapsed beneath the swinging ceiling lamp,
And in his eyes,
He holds an encapsulated image of white stallions.
His blood and genetics
Made cold with the cards he holds
In each of his manicured fingers,
A polished excuse for a man come to collect on favors.
With a careless sweep,
He perfectly somersaults three tarot cards
Directly beneath my hands that I can't seem to keep on the table.

He has a proposition for me,
He says,
Feeding on my short-term memory
As he takes the rush of synthetic feeling
Impressed thoughts that just
Birthed themselves underneath the crown of my cerebral skyline,
Injected into my system,
From revisiting Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,
And takes advantage of my moment of in-between,
That space we take when the world collapses in on us just for the night
And a mid-life crisis is too far away
To use as a valid option.

He reaches inside my hands,
Slivers his fingers in through my veins open wide,
Breathing in the day of tomorrow long before it even happens
And molests the steady and endearingly moronic beats of my heart
As they stumble out of my chest like baby chicks aimlessly
Trying to find their way back home.

Eyeing me with those stallions,
Those heavy shatter marks they make
As clumps of a black-sand beach front
Crumbles so closely to the outer shavings of my head,
A slumped-over halo circling my head
As it tries so hard to stand up straight,
But loves me all the more for letting it rest.

Remember what it was like
To have your best day,
He says,
And then,
Maybe we can talk about how to sell your bad parts,

But I want to keep my bad parts,
My good parts,
My mistakes and the things that make me proud to remember them.

He doesn't leave the table.
He doesn't take away the option.
He just listens,
And for a moment,
I look down to these tarot cards,
And they line themselves up in the off-white verticals
And glossed reflections of a photo album.
He's given me my memory,
A physical dimension to keep on my person
And with it,
Has given me the option to hold onto this past
Forever,
But do I want to continue to flip through pages
That hurt to feel good about?

I breathe in the scented musk.
This painful memory lust
That holds my backside close
And wraps itself around my stomach like the lover I never had,
It feels nice to float for now-
Just for now.
Perhaps this is just the waiting room
Before the door opens
And the man with the white suit
Shows me how to remember what happens now.

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Sharon Meixsell Sharon lives in Washington State. She writes hot erotica and fabulous poems. Sharon has co-authored a poetry book entitled, *Spirit Rocks*. Sharon will be published in an upcoming anthology titled *Preoccupied with Austin*.

Sad Star Self

Sad star self
Living in the vast sky
Soft light silhouettes you
In the mahogany window frame
Wearing your heart on your sleeve
Your normally sparkling eyes melancholy
What ails you oh sad star self?
Unrequited love
I am in the sky forever more
Looking down upon the one I love
Watching him love another

Driftwood

He feels your emptiness
As you float like driftwood
Never staying in one spot
Always moving, always searching
For the right place to call home
He tries to explain, tries to show you
That your foundation is here
That here you never will be alone
Here you will never be empty
Here you will feel fulfilled
You want to believe
Yet somehow still have doubts
Not willing to confront your fears
You enter the water once again

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Timothy Ogene was born and raised in Nigeria. He was shortlisted for the 2010 Arvon International Poetry Prize. Most recently, his poems have appeared in *Kin Poetry Journal*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Yagdrasil*, *Contemporary Literary Review India*, and other places. He lives in Wimberley, Texas *after* living in a fishing village in Liberia for about two years.

A Dream for Fifty-One

In my dream,
a party of mustachioed monsters drank
blood and oil;
a buffet of political meat and stale thoughts.

Done with dinner,
they sat above ground,
hovering over our collective future.

Where they come from,
I do not know.
Some say they are from our painful past.
Others say they were born the day we disturbed oil
where she lay peacefully beneath our farmlands
and creeks;
when we roused her from sleep with drills and dollars.

They spread like Ebola,
sowing seeds of shame where they find wealth.

Then we prayed a prayer of pain from a heart stripped of pride
by years of neglect.

Our tears collected in the clouds.
Our voices rode on wooden carts pushed by the combined
strength of a people in pain.
The fragrance of our tears attracted a host of sympathetic
dancers from the world beyond –

From the shades of the sun, a tiny whip descended.
Who wields it, the eyes cannot see. It went to work.
Mighty monsters fled to caves and rat holes
in sunless, oil-less places –

none spared.

Benjamin S. Pehr grew up in Houston, Texas. Received BA in English from UT Austin. Attended graduate school in English (creative writing) UT Austin. Self-employed as an importer of Nepali/Tibetan art and jewelry since 1980.

To a Man in the Café

When you are sitting alone in the café
And you have taken a seat at the last empty table
And the wet mist outside covers the glistening street
And droplets stream down the window beside your face
So that noise does not come through the glass
But the distant din of mingled chatter and clanging cups is held inside
And you have become isolated between sounds
Then a woman tall and thin stands at the door looking for an open table
And she looks your way then sits at your table
Because none are vacant and you're alone and would you mind
Perhaps it is a good excuse if she wants to meet someone
Because she stays to order when the people at the next table leave
And now it is empty but she remains across from you
Though you continue reading your paper while thinking of her
Because her eyes are like twin stars shining in a vacant blue universe
Then the waitress takes her order for coffee toast and jam
Amid the ebb and flow of floating words and clattering dishes
And her blouse has the top two buttons undone showing her cleavage
And you see the expansion and contraction of her heart as her breasts heave
The sinking and swelling of flesh revealing fear and desire
Meaning perhaps she likes your looks your manner your shyness
And silverware rattles against plates
While the dreariness outside presses against the window
Pushing you closer to her and she to you
While voices merge into one sound from the background of time
And your eyes meet hers midway over salt pepper and sugar
And she speaks purling a murmuring attempt at conversation
With her hand placed forward upon the red checkered tablecloth
And here is Aphrodite not quite as good as the original

For this one ages and the traces can be seen
So now her beauty comes in a mildness in her eyes
In which you sense yearning fighting against meekness
And in the power of silken hair and slender cheeks
And in the tenderness of loneliness desiring companionship
Which you recognize because you know it so well
While the tranquil drizzling of the sky reminds you of who you are
As you realize that you are no longer the center of the universe
And you strain against feelings as you make polite conversation
And you wonder if she is really so or is it a mere projection of hope
For now you are being drawn into her orbit
And you begin to revolve in the sphere of a smile
Which flutters on the mouth of a fidgeting Cleopatra
More lovely for not knowing what she is
And the noise comes back as music
So it is I ask you
When you are sitting all alone in the cafe
And a stranger becomes more important to you than you
Because you forget yourself in a revelation of beauty
Do you find the awareness of mutual oneness in multitude
And grasp it because it has become tangible in you and her
Or does the fear of death blind you to what we are
And to knowing that you have become invulnerable.

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Jane Steig Parsons AKA Smiling Jane – Jane Steig Parsons has worn many hats: teacher, educational psychologist, bassoonist, photographer, artist, poet, writer, dancer, wife, mother, and grandmother. Jane's life began, and nearly ended, in a small town near Spokane, WA. During her childhood and early adulthood Palo Alto, CA, was her home, followed briefly by NYC, San Francisco, Boston, and, for the last 45 years, Austin, TX. She has two children, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law and four grandchildren ranging in age from 3 to 16 years of age, living in Austin and San Jose, CA. Jane earned three degrees from two universities, Stanford and Columbia, and has owned a one-person photographic business, Prints Charming Photography, since 1987. Currently she is working on her memoirs, writing poetry, photographing, volunteering, and enjoying life.

An Asthmatic's Lament

Laughter. . . just out of reach.

Wafting from a smoke-filled room.

Should I be forced to choose my companions

Based on their relative desire for nicotine?

A difficult choice

But I must choose isolation.

And so, I sit outside, alone,

contemplating the sobering truth:

“Addiction is stronger than friendship.”

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Jazz One is not a rapper, he's a poet with good self esteem. Jazz's poetry was featured in Eric Power's film, 'Night People: Seize the Night'. The film was awarded Best Experimental Film at the Trildance Film Festival. Jazz's spoken word performances have been included in Channel Austin's televised poetry showcase. Jazz has been performed his work in non-traditional venues for poetry such as rock and hip hop shows. 2007 Jazzie's poetry was featured on a Hip Hop album from the Fresh Boy Crew. Jazz One has performed at shows with some the world's top poetry talent. He has recently taken his poetry on the road and playing shows around Texas and touring out of state.

Unfinished Love Joint

My child-hood hero was Evel Knievel
A wing, a prayer
....and I'm a believer.
You don't know you can fly
...until you leave the ground.
If you ask me why, I will reply,
...not even gravity can keep me down.
I bear scars from , when i crash and burned.
School of hard knocks, my lessons learned.
I was a good kid, with an Evel streak.
When I had a feared heights, I jumped 200 feet,
...bound by a bungee cord.
I overcome fear for sport.
Eye of the tiger, but I'm not Rocky,
....but I know,
I'm the only person that can stop me.
I fear no man, but the right woman.
My biggest fear is falling in love again.

If I give you part of my heart I may never get it back

Love makes smart people do dumb things.
Love makes people say things they don't mean.

love will give you a reason for not leaving.
love is like lust with good intentions.
Love will make you make bad decisions.
Love can play a lover for a sucker.
If love is an addiction, then recovery is undercover.
Love will make you mourn a late lover.
Love can put a lil slack in your Mack.
When love is gone, you want it back.
Love will make you eyes go green and see red.
Love can leave you with the blues.
Love might make you possessive like apostrophe "s".
Love will make you think no, and still say yes.
Love will make you write bad poetry.
Love can make the sane person crazy.
Love will make you believe a lie.

Love will make you ask 'why, why, why!?', when you know why.
If I give you a part of my heart /I may never get it back

Last time I fell in love, I was terrified,
like jumping, not knowing if your tether's tied.
Like speeding down gravel road on a bike
at night and turning off your headlight.
My worst fears have been realized.
Love is a trust fall, when you trust no one.
I heard love conquers all, but it doesn't.
I wish love was stronger than addiction.
I wish love was strong than depression.
Love doesn't solve problems,
but love makes the solutions sweeter.
It's no cure all, be all, end all,
....but love is having someone to
brush the dirt off when you fall.

Back Cover Art & Poetry:

Jan Benson “Hope Soars” (See bio page 68)

Bob Mud “Spiral” (poetry by Bob Mudd, layout design by Susan Beall Summers)

Bob Mud of Australia is well-known for his mud-painting, his art using natural and recycled materials and playing hand-made flutes and didgeridoo instruments. He works with children to create special art projects as he teaches conservation. He is an accomplished musician, poet, artist, and advocate for living lightly upon the earth.

Some of his more unique accomplishments include a huge mud mural in Austin for the Voodoo Lounge on 4th street and is in the *Guinness Book of Records* for world’s longest mud mural which is now in gardens all over Austin as mulch. Presently, he makes Aboriginal faces for people’s trees-designed to naturally go back to the earth from which they came, and you can find some of those here in Austin at Enchanted Forest.

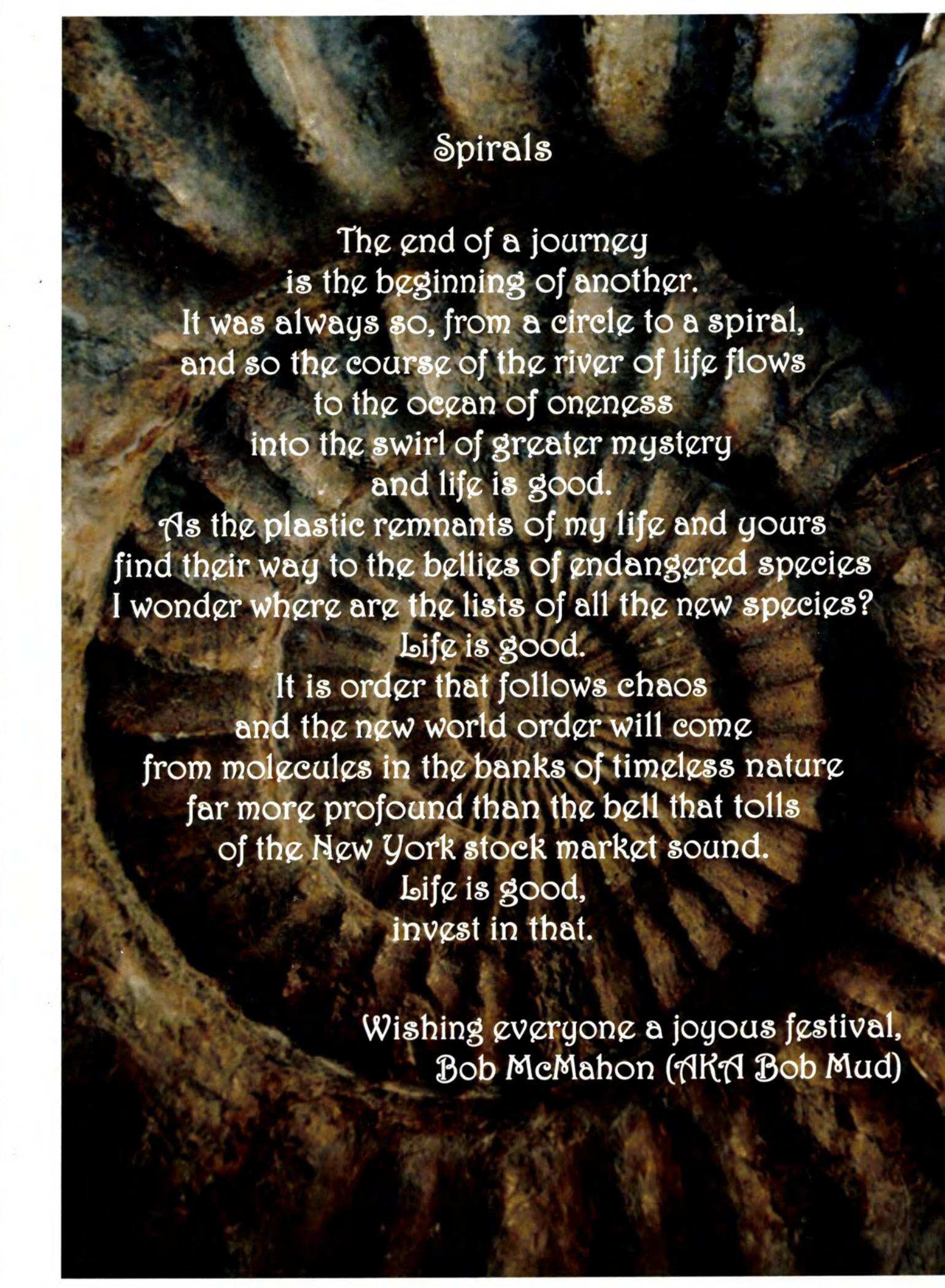
Back in The Land Down Under, he built an art gallery out of discarded packing crates, ran a community theater in Pomona (via Gympie), and set up an alternative education center at The Island (an abandoned site) where a Surrealist Festival made their home. His record of habitat bird songs was a hit in Australia on Larrikin Records. His life size mannequins were hung in the streets of North Melbourne where he set up the first commune (coffee shop) as a sanctuary for artists, poets and musicians.

His poetry is in many AIPF Anthologies and he supported the Midnight to Dawn readings to the very dawning! You can view his photograph at Fair Bean playing the circular didgeridoo.





Hope Soars
by Jan Benson



Spirals

The end of a journey
is the beginning of another.

It was always so, from a circle to a spiral,
and so the course of the river of life flows
to the ocean of oneness
into the swirl of greater mystery
and life is good.

As the plastic remnants of my life and yours
find their way to the bellies of endangered species
I wonder where are the lists of all the new species?

Life is good.

It is order that follows chaos
and the new world order will come
from molecules in the banks of timeless nature
far more profound than the bell that tolls
of the New York stock market sound.

Life is good,
invest in that.

Wishing everyone a joyous festival,
Bob McMahon (AKA Bob Mud)