

di-vêrse'-city

2005

Anthology  
of the  
Austin International  
Poetry Festival

Edited by  
VICKI GOLDSBERRY

Co-edited by  
BARBARA YOUNGBLOOD CARR &  
CARLYN LUKE REDING

Cover Art by LAURA LOPEZ CANO  
Cover Design by GLYNN M. IRBY



*di-vêrse' -city*

Copyright © 2005 by Austin Poets International, Inc.

**Austin Poets International  
2004-2005 Board of Directors**

Byron Kocen, M.D., Chairman  
Deborah A. Akers  
John Berry  
Barbara Youngblood Carr  
Nancy Kenney Connolly  
Vicki Goldsberry  
Reggie Goodwin  
Ron Horne  
Steve Kocen  
Roy Mann  
Sandra Rincon  
Steve Vera

Lifetime Advisory Council  
Peggy Zuleika Lynch

Gayle Hight, Festival Director  
2005 Austin International Poetry Festival

Cover Art Created Especiall for AIPF by Laura Lopez Cano

ISBN: 0-9743486-3-5

This anthology and the Austin International Poetry Festival  
have been underwritten in part by support of  
the City of Austin Arts Commission and the Writers' League of Texas.

Special thanks also to the supporters, members, and volunteers  
of Austin Poets International, Inc., and to all the poets  
who honor us with their participation.

Printed in the United States of America  
by Morgan Printing, Austin, Texas

---

## Table of Contents

Remnants	Judith Austin Mills	9
Yukon	Stephan Baley	10
Smoke	Robin Blackburn	11
Race Car Dog	Marc Brandeis	12
Impossible Translation	Silvia Brandon-Pèrez	13
Devoured	Valerie Bridgeman Davis	14
Conception	Kimberly L. Brown	15
The Latest From the West Coast	Barry Brummett	16
Mistaken Identity	Del Cain	17
After Seeing Georgia O'Keeffe's Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art	Cindy Childress	18
The End of All Things, or What I Wished For	Grace Chua	19
Concussion	Cleo Creech	20
Sleeping With Merwin	Solana d'Lamant	21
Hands	Nicholas Dorosheff	22
Negative Hand	Bob Duffy	23
Montana	Machelle Dunlop	24
Let Nature Live	Doyle Fellers	25
The Paraplegic's Paradox	Nancy Fierstien	26
Transfusions	Patricia Fiske	27
The Hippo Woman	Elaine Flory	28
The Light Regained	Emily Freede	29
Sewing Bees	Anita Garvey	30
Apollo and Daphne	Christine Gilbert	31
Gold Fish	Lisa Grable	32
Absolution	Lyman Grant	33
Enough Blood	Joyce Gullickson	34
Contrasts	Michael Gullickson	35

---

---

Volente	Shlomi Harif	36
Portrait	Ralph Hausser	37
Mother	Peggy Hill	38
Touching Different Worlds	James Hoggard	39
Bridges	Yong Shu Hoong	40
Sunnyasi Honeymoon	Zara Houshmand	41
Icon	Terri Lynne Hudson	42
The Offer	Eileen Hugo	43
Blow-Out: 03:30 A.M.	Cindy Huyser	44
The Insight of Oracles	Glynn Monroe Irby	45
Crow Dance	Thomas Jackson	46
Folding	Jazz Jaeschke	47
Miles Showed Me His Trumpet	Larry Jaffe	48
Breakwater	Maggie Jochild	49
Too Old to Fall in Love Again	David C. Johnson	50
Thyme for Onions	Amanda Johnston	51
Burger Heaven	Ken Jones	52
Ode to the Eggplant	Persis M. Karim	53
House	Ingrid Karklins	54
Hands (Parkinson's)	Marcelle Kasprowicz	55
Georgia Toll 400	Collin Kelley	56
If I Had a Garden of Dreams	T. Keyser	57
Out of the Night	Peggy Zuleika Lynch	58
Compass, Gauge, Container	Jenna Martin	59
No More Brooms	Anne McCrady	60
Upon Discovery, Behind the Wedding Chapel, A Burial Mound for Dancing Shoes	Stazja McFadyen	61
The Memory of Water	Agnes Meadows	62
Jeanne Marie Writes a New Book	Neil Meili	63
Mailman in the Rain	David Meischen	64
Soma Delusion	Matthew Mendez	65

---

---

Breath Steps	Carole Metellus	66
<i>Agua Caliente</i> . . . Hot Water	Donna Marie Miller	67
Steadfast Souls	Betty Mol	68
Revision	Katherine Durham Oldmixon	69
Cathedral Ceilings	Tommie Ortega	70
They Were Dead Black	Joy Palmer	71
Half a Lime	Nii Ayikwei Parkes	72
Man Seeking HOT BODY	Angela Patterson	73
Still Life, With Solstice	Deborah Wardlaw Pattillo	74
Elegy	Alice Pettway	75
Second Poem for Dillon, Colorado	Carl Polgar	76
Dostoevsky's Voice	Ron Riddell	77
Red Rainboots for Joseph Cornell	Jennifer Rogers	78
Regurgitated Poetry	Michael Romero	79
The Day's Bouquet	Chip Ross	80
Dreams Always in Color	Anne Schneider	81
Swimming for It	Rowena Silver	82
Genius of Patience	Scott Sloan	83
To Be	D. Antwan Stewart	84
To Enchant a Garden	Dr. Charles A. Stone	85
Rude Bears	Rod C. Stryker	86
His Virginia Woolf	Mary-Agnes Taylor	87
Fold-In #6	Hugh Tribbey	88
On the Seventh Day	Claiborne Schley Walsh	89
Camping Next to Tombstones	Arlene Wedgwood	90
Citizen Eagle	Jenny White	91
Japanese Maple	Scott Wiggerman	92
New Year's Resolutions After Cancer Surgery	Jill Wiggins	93
<i>Azza</i> —The Ceremony of Grief	Sholeh Wolpé	94
Waking Up to Find My Wife Sleeping in Another Room	Robert Wynne	95

---

---

Barrio Poem #1	Joaquín Zihuatanejo	96
About the Editorial Committee		97
About the Artist		98
About the Designer		99

---

---

## Preface

People ask me what it's like to be editor of *di-verse-city*.

I say it's like jumping into the 68 degree water at Barton Springs. Anticipation of the stinging vibrancy nearly paralyzes me. But, collecting courage from past knowledge and the promise of grace in the surrender, I make the plunge — shivering into the unknown, unraveling into the mercy of undulating silken waters.

It's like that.

Luxuriating in words, I am immersed in poetry, in what Wordsworth described as “the breathings of the heart.” And though a similarity exists to Forrest Gump's proverbial box of chocolates, the experience is more complex: each poem takes me on a journey into another's life.

In that otherness, I may embrace a forgotten knowing. The poet in his eloquence illuminates subjects we may wish to ignore or forget. He or she has been as haunted as we, survived, and lived to tell the story in words that resonate — sometimes on the page, sometimes in our ears, always in our hearts and minds.

As readers of poetry know, fools aren't the only ones who rush in where angels fear to tread. Even Freud claimed, “Everywhere I go I find that a poet has been there before me.” Words and rhythms entice us into an utterly new knowing of a world of less defined realms of good and evil, light and shadow, than we believed possible. We see the spectrum revealed in its harmony, the lotus manifest in its perfection.

More than anything, reading good poetry makes me want to write poems. I long to write a narrative about the time my cousin convinced me to croon “Singing in the Rain” during a prayer in Sunday school. . . a ditty about the jealous cockatiel. . . a paean to Aunt Florence's creamed corn. . . a boogie woogie riff on meditation. After feasting on poetry for weeks, I want to belt out poems, torch singer style, that will unfold and disclose, serenade and purr.

Ultimately, a poet is a seer, a sage, a prophet. He or she focuses our attention on that which must be unveiled. As Frost wrote, “Poetry is about the grief. Politics is about the grievance.” The poet sounds an alarm, a keening cry that will not be ignored.

This year's submissions to *di-verse-city* reflect an incisive awareness of our own mortality, reminding us to delight in the opulent “now” — the blessing of the natural world, the impermanence of life, the symmetry of relationship, the joy of food, the luster of the creative process. Returning again and again to a singular subject, poets

---

---

echo Sand's assertion, "There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved."

My co-editors, Barbara Youngblood Carr and Carlyn Luke Reding, and I judged nearly 500 poems in blind readings, trusting Coleridge's definition, "Poetry: the best words in the best order." In a quest for excellence, we frisked every poem, scouting for surprise, honesty, rarity, and artistry. In short, we wanted to fall in love with the poem.

I proudly present to you *di-verse-city 2005*, a volume embracing the richness and distinction of the Austin International Poetry Festival, the nation's largest open forum poetry event. Don't just stand there, parched and longing. Jump on in — the water is exhilarating, and so is the poetry.

**Vicki Goldsberry**

---

---

## Remnants

when nothing much was  
on tv  
or in my mind  
i landed at a placid documentary  
about the ancient and extinctly champion greeks  
to pass away the present idling time  
a grand theme reverberated  
*democracy*  
a golden name resonated *pericles*  
such factoid nuggets were easy to latch onto  
while monitoring  
my evening caffeine brew  
and waiting  
for thick bread  
to better toast

i had i discovered  
the presence to wonder  
if such fleeting concepts as  
*community liberty joy*  
once popped up  
and startled an entire population  
like a sudden and deliriously sensuous snack

it made me think to ask  
if grit long since settled alongside the acropolis  
has retained any trace  
of stale acidity  
from spattered blood or careless wine

or crudely singed  
remnants  
of  
the crux of life

Judith Austin Mills  
Pflugerville, Texas

---

## Yukon

I can imagine a Yukon Highway  
with two moons and a beautiful  
university fountain that  
has never been and that I  
have never seen, but she  
keeps telling me to write  
realism. So I try  
to write about the fruit, but  
it ends up just becoming  
fruit, and when I try to write about  
my father and his symphony,  
I realize that my mother  
won't be visiting this time.

Stephan Baley  
Austin, Texas

---

## Smoke

The cigarette hung  
Dangerously  
From your lips  
As if one slight slip

would  
send  
it  
burning  
to  
the  
floor  
at  
my  
feet

And every time you  
Started to smile I  
Gasped  
Scared

Of catching on fire

**Robin Blackburn**  
San Marcos, Texas

---

## Race Car Dog

My old dog crawled out of the porch on a cool fall day using only  
her forepaws  
Pulling at the damp earth, sliding over the browned leaves of sugar  
maple and oak

Looking out the kitchen window I knew she was near the end.  
Fourteen years isn't bad for a dog so I'd try not to feel too sad  
though a decade later I still miss her.

She lay on the ground in the middle of the yard  
staring at the shed where field mice made their nests  
Staring at the tree innumerable squirrels had fled up,  
chittering madly from rocking boughs  
Staring at the weathered wooden fence bounding the property  
Staring at the walls of the home we had shared in the crackling cold  
of winter

It began to rain.  
Should I bring her in? Should I leave her be?  
I put on a rain slick, went outside and lay beside her, petting her.  
Hey, my race car dog. Ah, my beauty. Such a good girl!  
Now is the time for rest. Now is the time for peace. The world is  
weeping, too.

It rained again the next day.  
Race car dog stayed in the yard, unmoving,  
until that evening her ribs stilled  
her body cooled  
the rain ended  
And I'm sure I saw a shooting star  
joyously chasing the moon.

**Marc Brandeis**  
**Waterloo, Ontario, Canada**

---

## Impossible Translations

an attempt to tell you  
in blood pain crushed garlic  
the occasional smile  
how it is on my planet, why early morning  
eyesopen — brussteethshower — new day!

when yesterday there was an ache  
in that small place between the arms  
where a lover's head rested, where the child  
slept in between suckling of nipples,  
where time passed

but language, frangible (and how I love  
the word) as hearts or tibias, small  
metatarsal bones, elusive sanity,  
fails in the effort; whether you can  
translate, from the ruins of language  
love

Silvia Brandon-Pèrez  
Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania

---

## Devoured

rain sweeps away memories  
of days when you were the chief reason  
I arose from bed, the moments  
swallowed like transgressions,  
our primary sin that we did not  
know the end of things

letting go is easy  
if you can feel the burn of rope  
in hand, your grip slipping  
into the inevitability of  
the beginning of the end  
and the only knot to stop  
you is the one gathered  
in your throat

taut against my dreams  
are the ways you swallowed me  
whole, taking no time to chew  
you, too hungry  
to savor  
the taste,  
me, too desperate  
to insist that  
if you were  
going to devour me  
you should take your time

Valerie Bridgeman Davis  
Memphis, Tennessee

---

## Conception

Attempting to put the pieces together  
painting each brushstroke  
with the passion of an eagle  
in flight,  
applying life lessons  
to each thought  
each moment  
each movement.

Having a piece of art  
only in your imagination  
housed  
bound  
in the depths of your soul  
creative light  
existing in painful memories  
yet contemplating each stroke  
navigating across the canvas  
separating societal distractions.

Tears cascade  
onto my palette  
creating new shades  
of color,  
and in this  
moment  
I release my masterpiece.

Kimberly L. Brown  
Grand Prairie, Texas

---

## The Latest From the West Coast

Her body has become the evening news.  
Displayed and splayed in organs, bones, and fluids,  
her intimacies offered up by he  
who shows her parts with daily bulletins.  
We knew her as a friend. We shook her hand.  
We chatted to the music of the band  
that serenaded social gatherings  
at yearly meetings softened up by gin:  
“so how are you?” “I’m fine and did you hear?”  
Like that — no deeper and from year to year  
each chance to disembowel ourselves went by,  
no livers bared, no spread of butt or thigh,  
no proffer of an ovary or spleen.  
No. No unseemly parts as offerings.  
Well, now we know how many quarts they drained  
and what was pierced and how the cloth was stained  
and how much longer and what’s planned until  
and all this secondhand, for she stands still  
in our imaginations, being skinned  
and flayed of flesh and all that lies within.  
Her secrets all unwilling are revealed,  
she dies of frankness and she won’t be healed.

Barry Brummett  
Austin, Texas

---

## Mistaken Identity

It was a pat on the back.  
Not the kind you feel good about,  
it asked for my attention.

I turned and found myself  
trying to erase her stumbling apologies  
with a waving hand.

“Oh, you’re not the man I thought you were.”

Long ago I heard that from one  
who thought she knew me better than  
does this stranger behind me in line  
as we wait to pay our bills at Denny’s.

That thought, echoing across thirty years,  
has made me realize that  
I am not the man I thought I was, either,  
and that’s not altogether bad.

**Del Cain**  
Saginaw, Texas

---

## After Seeing Georgia O’Keeffe’s Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art

O’Keeffe outlines barren mountains  
topped with antlered skulls the size of the sky  
from far away, or nearby  
they are ant hills  
shaded by bovine bones

I see dark places  
in the crevice of an iris  
blackness lurks beneath lavender petals,  
or silk cradles a dark sister —  
secret kept from the canvas

The shadow I don’t cast in the sun  
but bury beneath lipsticked smile  
as though there is no ghost towering  
the city, or perhaps because there is one

towering over me, touching me  
in Central Park the trees whisper  
of their desert twins,  
and I am both painter and subject.

Cindy Childress  
Lafayette, Louisiana

---

## The End of All Things, or What I Wished For

Beneath the rag tree\*  
at the end of all things  
I say I want a lake:  
a sword-sharp lake,  
bleak and green as glass,  
etching in the kindling scree  
under a flint sky.  
Perhaps feral dragonflies  
crackling with scorn  
across the water. Paper dinghies,  
tiny hats,  
singing with birds. And the fins  
of arrowroots  
to break the surface.

Here at the end of all things  
I say I want a boat:  
a lone canoe,  
cracked and wood and tarred.  
Let me cross over to the other side —  
(I don't mean distant shores,  
but the reverse surface  
in among the sleek secret rushes, me  
tilting over the edge of the boat and  
waving up at you frenetically)

Let there be splashing in the reeds.  
Let me pitch through the water,  
sway crazily —  
rock me to sleep so I float.

\*The rag tree, or *clootie*, is a Celtic custom: supplicants tie prayer  
rag onto a tree at a holy well to have their prayers answered.

Grace Chua  
Hanover, New Hampshire

---

## Concussion

The super-synthetic nature  
of the steering wheel presents,  
as if suddenly with X-ray eyes  
I see through the leatherette ridges  
each spinning atom of the  
long-chain polymer molecules.

A hyperdrive spider weaving  
exploding webs of jagged cracks  
across the windshield  
hanging dewdrops of safety glass  
to glitter and prism  
in the street lights.

I remember thinking even then. . .  
“I will forget this, this too real moment.”  
A memory too hot to be held close,  
too steeped in adrenaline and blood.  
They ask, “What do you remember?”  
“It’s all a blank,” I answer.

I run through this movie, frame by frame  
like my own Zapruder Super-8  
and I have to believe, if I dream it. . .  
it will come — come back to me.  
But it just lies there a sleeping dog,  
that may or may not lie.

It’s as if someone carelessly  
copied over whole parts of my brain.  
It’s like our wedding tape got used  
to record old reruns or bad movies.  
But just who is my brain to decide  
what I’m ready or not to remember?

If I can rewind the memory enough  
before the blood was in my eyes  
before the brain-swelled darkness took me  
if I can remember hard and real enough  
I will see again your smile that caught my gaze  
that held my gaze a sigh too long that night.

Cleo Creech  
Atlanta, Georgia

---

## Sleeping With Merwin

I sleep alone at night. I cover the sheet  
with petals. I sleep alone. I am aware  
it is not good to sleep alone. Sleep's bread  
is more wholesome if broken together.  
Last night I slept with W.S. Merwin. Again.  
Merwin thought he was an appropriate choice  
for my bed: the mattresses' agreement with the body,  
a sigh for depressing hips, the rise into the belly.  
He said it's very gratifying to sleep  
with mythical characters and he himself has enjoyed  
many slumbers with Holub and Trekl.  
He spoke, leaning on my pillow-spread hair,  
about writing "The Child." As we settled in,  
he murmured how writing it was an act  
of self-purification, how he used words as notes  
to sing solemn hymns about the agony  
of a generation which knows itself  
to be the last. Surmounting  
his inaccessible presence is larger  
than the rhythmic breath of others. To unlearn  
his Presbyterian roots, he pulled over his bare skin  
my copper satin comforter. He whispered:  
"If I could learn the word for yes,  
it could teach me questions." I feel him spoon  
me, humming. Perhaps there is no Ur song,  
only what we do not have and find everywhere.

Solana d'Lamant  
Dallas, Texas

---

## Hands

These hands I've seen so many times before  
Now lie folded stiff in quiet repose, eternally.  
If I could see his back, I'd recognize it as easily:  
So many days we worked without our shirts  
In garden heat and orchard sun for years and years  
His back a map of liver spots and warty moles  
That has, I'm sure, presaged my own.

Silently I stand beside what now is left of this spent man  
I called my dad. My hands are folded just like his.  
He lies on satin though I doubt he'd ever slept  
On silk or satin sheets in all his life. I turn away  
With eyes as dry as is my soul from loss, but later  
In a closet hung with faded shirts and tattered cuffs  
My hands will press those clothes unto my face  
And I will cry in heaving sobs at memories  
That linger in their musty scent.

Nicholas Dorosheff  
Herndon, Virginia

---

## Negative Hand

Here I am;  
here is my hand.

Hand that spalled the flint  
and bore the razor cuts  
and bled to do it,  
that faired and bound the spear  
and found the balance point and threw it,

Hand that shaped  
my wild hunting cries  
and sent them to my brothers,  
that pointed game  
and waved the sun out of my eyes.

Hand that sought the roundness of her  
and pulled her taming hard,  
hard against my chest,  
that held the infant wet  
and restless raised it high for its naming.

Child of the father that I am,  
here is my hand.

**Bob Duffy**  
**Franklin, New Hampshire**

---

## Montana

Your eyes smile  
and within their depths is a forest of green  
like the untamed wilds of Montana mountain woods.  
I am fixed by your gaze,  
secure in a solace of fir and pine just before dusk,  
framed by sunlight in shadow.  
You are present — yet remote —  
like the rough country, wise with fairy slipper  
or rocky mountain lily.  
I am swallowed by your river,  
consumed by water swift, clear, and cold,  
to surface wet — and feral — on the lakeshore.  
Lost in silent sunset hues  
that reflect — like grace — off the glassy lake,  
I instinctively crawl to your fire,  
a radiant heat on a rocky shore.  
Your blaze is brilliant,  
fierce against transparent night,  
adorned by stars, elegant and innumerable.  
Your responsive embrace,  
these flawless moments  
— rare as osprey's eggs —  
I treasure.

Machelle Dunlop  
Austin, Texas

---

## Let Nature Live

Embrace the thoughts  
Of quiet places —  
Crystal clean flowing waters,  
Broad clear horizons, open spaces.

Take hold of all  
Within our care:  
The earth, the sky, the sea —  
All nature's fare.

For all we claim,  
Each one of us is bound to bear  
The burden, blame, and cost,  
Of our individual care.

For all we take,  
Each must return in fold,  
Our granted, gifted stake  
For our own and nature's sake.

Let nature live  
That all may live,  
And all will receive much more  
Than each alone can ever give.

Simple thoughts,  
So easy to forget —  
But once lost,  
They're everyone's regret.

Doyle Fellers  
Dripping Springs, Texas

---

## The Paraplegic's Paradox

My knees buckle;  
a fly walks by  
on legs  
no thicker than my hair.

How it pains me  
to compare  
the way I sit,  
the way I stare!

Nancy Fierstien  
Dripping Springs, Texas

---

## Transfusions

*I feel just like a young girl again,*  
my dying mother whispered.  
“Doctor, do something!” I say.  
Result, a futile blood transfusion.  
Her first lucidity for days.  
No painkilling drugs talking now,  
but someone’s youthful blood,  
coursing through a wasted body,  
giving mother transient hope.  
*I feel just like a young girl again.*

And for a while, she believed me  
when I said she was not dying,  
but she was, and I was lying.  
She was dying.  
That flush of youth, so brief,  
left like a thief, with hope captive.

Now, at seventy-eight, her age then,  
transfused by hope and good health,  
I often feel like a young girl again.  
But often transfusion goes so soon,  
like a thief, with hope its captive.  
Old preconceptions intrude, like  
“act your age,” and I try for a while,  
until a rainbow, a starry night, or a  
tender touch pulses through my being,  
and *I feel just like a young girl again.*

Patricia Fiske  
Austin, Texas

---

## The Hippo Woman

The Hippo Woman rises  
Round and beautiful and pale  
With the Equatorial mist from the Mountain  
Nile each morning of the green-woven  
World to bless and guard her  
Tenacious tribes from swift  
Crocodiles or other  
Thieves of joy.

With drum-rushed ecstasy you  
Leapt the Goddess's river dances and shouted  
Her Songs, together as one man, masters of the hunt and  
Heart, together as one will, while the women  
Painted their dark bodies with pale  
River mud and aspired to  
The Hippo Woman's  
Lovely shape.

As drums quivered the thick-fibered  
Forests the painted women smiled with their dark  
Eyes to call their chosen to them, but  
Who would choose you, the white priest's prodigy, destined for  
A land far and strange? And so alone you journeyed to  
an ungreen World, where the very air is a thief who  
Steals the sun's rich nourishing warmth and leaves  
Behind only the crushed eggshells of snow.

No wonder you smile now across a cavernous classroom at the  
Shy blonde girl — round and beautiful and  
Pale — smile with  
Worshipful eyes, not yet fathoming this frozen, riverless  
World guarded by the thieves of joy, or that  
You are the small  
Black dog she cannot allow  
Upon her white fat-dimpled leg.

Elaine Flory  
Corpus Christi, Texas

---

## The Light Regained

We measure it in time:  
Our days upon the earth  
As if somehow the span of dates  
Can signify our worth

And there upon a stone  
That lingers longer still  
A life is noted — here, then gone,  
Now planted on this hill

Remains the empty husk from which  
The seed was carried full and rich  
To timeless fields  
Where furrows yield  
Unending fertile soil

A seedling journeys forth  
Unmeasured, unrestrained  
Emerging from an earthly toil  
Into the light regained

Emily Freede  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

---

## Sewing Bees

Being from different regions,  
she had never heard the term,  
and he had never mentioned it.  
Her big bear-like husband  
ordinarily dealt  
in life's larger notions.

Standing in the yard,  
he pointed to the dragonflies  
deftly working their thread-like fingers  
over the patchwork of flowers,  
as though embroidering them with pollen.

"Oh look," he exclaimed,  
"sewing bees!"

The stark innocence of the term,  
and his tender attention  
on such a gossamer scrap of wonder,  
filled her heart to the bursting,  
and right then and there  
she fell in love with him  
all over again.

Anita Garvey  
Dallas, Texas

---

## Apollo and Daphne

Green leaves unfurl in my hands.  
Sprigs sprout from her fingertips.  
Steady in a twisted pose she stands,  
turned to wood to escape my lips.

Beneath the coarseness of her bark  
I feel a warm heart beating.  
Never will she love or kiss me,  
forever frozen, always fleeing.

My hand slides down her slender trunk,  
defying Eros and his games.  
Though she forever spurns me,  
her coldness fuels my flames.

Passing forms of pleasure tempt  
like vats of dark sweet wine.  
Oh, I'm drunk on love for Daphne,  
who never will be mine.

And now a master sculptor  
has turned us into stone.  
Her skin is alabaster.  
Her heart is like a bone.

**Christine Gilbert**  
Austin, Texas

---

## Gold Fish

I'm a twelve-cent doubloon  
Netted from a crowded tank.  
Decorative companion,  
I wiggle my tail,  
Swish iridescent lingerie fins,  
Dance for you with agile expertise,  
Soar upward eager to swallow  
Your pinches of green flakes.  
Lips break the surface to kiss your air,  
Quickly retreat in fear  
At the stroke of your laugh.  
Eyes blind to avoid you,  
I cruise in circles,  
Churn my bed of despair,  
Then sleep alone.

Yet another decorative object;  
Disregard of my regard for you is toxic.  
Listen stay reach into my cool depths,  
Plumb my currents and we will swim.

Ordinary copper pennies sink.  
Gold coins lie beneath the sand.  
Before you is a golden egg,  
Kernel filled to burst with spirit.

My words bubble as you gaze,  
Algae grows between us  
On the resilient plastic wall  
Where you smile at your reflection  
Before you walk away.

Lisa Grable  
League City, Texas

---

## Absolution

Come with me and step into this grove  
of cedars. Let us breathe together  
deeply scents of old forests mourning.  
Let us spread upon these leaves bright quilts  
patched by a thousand grandmothers, sad  
gifts for daughters' daughters' beds of faith  
and duty. If you wish I will call  
paintbrush, firewheel, and gayfeather  
to bloom again out of season or  
I will drop blossoms of wild summer  
roses into clay bowls filled with cool  
water and with cloth torn from my shirt,  
I will wash your hands and neck, your face  
and feet, your breasts and sex. If you wish  
I will sweeten your naked strength with  
almond oil, then leave you to rest in  
warm cedar shade. I will stand beneath  
the cruel sun until he falls from his  
pulpit and the white moon sings from her  
loft the song of your magnificence.  
When you call, if you call, I'll return  
to you. I will carry a bottle  
of perfect wine, heavy on the tongue  
with one last taste of cherry, and loaves  
of crusty bread, light as fish inside,  
tasting of sesame and olives.  
Together we will serve the other  
who has always been traveling with us.  
We who are wanderers all have our  
stories but I, who love you now, hear  
nothing to forgive. I can only stand  
on firm ground and admire you. I see  
volcanoes in your soul I hope someday  
to dance inside. I bow before  
the ten thousand births that nest in you.

Lyman Grant  
Elgin, Texas

---

## Enough Blood

I write with a pencil  
produced in Indonesia  
The child's soul who pressed it  
now imprinted on this page  
Ageless eyes  
haunted by hunger  
ache of his bony scapula  
transferred through my fingertips  
His bruised body washed out to sea  
by a purpose bigger than his own  
begging even now  
for rescue  
struggling against the tide  
able to outlast the tsunami's strength  
another refugee  
clinging to a limb  
I offer his blood  
my blood  
enough blood, for two.

Joyce Gullickson  
Nederland, Texas

---

## Contrasts

In the freshly fallen snow  
a nun walks carefully towards  
her destination.

The dark green hedge  
is now frosted  
and you can see yesterday's roses  
are blood beneath a skin of white.

The nun sees all of this  
but she has errands to keep —  
remembers her calling  
feels the warmth of her faith  
a fireplace glowing within her.

Her footprints punctuate the path.  
Where she has turned or hesitated  
as visible/as evident  
as the long stretch of straight.

It is what makes her human.

The nun walks cautiously in the snow,  
like a word moving across a blank page.

She is.

Michael Gullickson  
Nederland, Texas

---

## Volente

The lost shoes at Volente  
step up to tables stand  
lost in side path cavort  
on my  
one on grassy plinths accompanied  
into exile with the occasional bucket  
or red, plastic shovel

Off the coast the boats wait, hovering  
but the expected migration of  
flipflops & sandals seems to have  
petered out  
at water's edge.

**Shlomi Harif**  
Austin, Texas

---

## Portrait

A few minutes of distraction,  
of watching a tug and its barges come  
too close to the yacht harbor,  
and both the youth on his bike, who was  
carrying an inexpensive Kodak Brownie,  
and the man engaging him in talk,  
the one the other men held in suspicion,  
were out of sight, gone down the  
shoreline path, past the rocks  
and the little ferryboat house. Nor were  
either of them seen again in this place until,  
two decades hence, the boy, now middle-aged,  
came back to look around and comment  
to a friend how the harbor and the trail were  
where it all began, both the good and bad;  
where from a start of being a callow  
eighteen had come his life of fame  
in capturing the visages of men and  
women, girls and boys: a certain  
natural ability to get beneath surfaces,  
revealing truths his subjects did not even  
acknowledge about themselves. Thus  
Vincent walked with me and spoke  
about his life after Victor, from whom  
he learned everything. Even as we walked,  
I barely heard his Leica click or noticed I  
was where the lens was pointed.

Ralph Hausser  
Austin, Texas

---

## Mother

For a moment, time feels comfortable  
here. To move anything would deny you —  
everything must remain the same.  
Sparrows chatter; the cat climbs  
into my lap and falls asleep.

Laughter about summer evenings on the porch,  
the hum of bees. You say, “The lemon is  
in full bloom. And look at the pear blossoms.”  
You say, “The fragrance of white roses  
this year. . .” Even the molded iris in  
rosewood vases, the blanket on the sofa —

A watercolor landscape,  
particular shade of an autumn sky.  
For a moment you are here — maple tree  
outside the front door, a slight breeze  
through wind chimes.

Peggy Hill  
Wilton, California

---

# Touching Different Worlds

1

Afternoons more than mornings  
I spent hours watching clouds  
forming creatures and stories  
in the kingdom of the sky

Elephant trunks and deer were there,  
rhino horns and wild boar tusks,  
unicorns and dinosaurs  
and faces and beasts I'd never seen

And sometimes winds made the creatures crash  
and wisps of vapors, unattached,  
struck my attention alert:  
I was sailing alone on a distant sea

2

Morning skies, though, seldom mattered  
Mornings were for persimmon fights  
and the time to haul up the pipes  
friends and I had found in the creek  
Catfish often lodged in them

There were worlds under water,  
and worlds under rocks, worlds in tall grass  
and more worlds in the thick oak woods

3

Morning meant earth, but afternoons, sky,  
and evening's games kept me outside  
There were endless worlds I had to explore,  
and some were worlds I could barely see:  
neighborhood yards full of tarantula holes  
and snakes coiled up in flowerbeds —  
I had a thousand worlds to explore,  
and most of those I could barely see

**James Hoggard**  
Wichita Falls, Texas

---

## Bridges

Every day in the time I had in Pittsburgh  
I took my pick of bridges to get from Northside into downtown

Imagining I was really crossing perilous chasms  
while beneath me it was only mystical water

Remembering reading somewhere that there are 450 bridges  
in this city where three rivers meet

Knowing how in this off-center of America  
I was crossing bridges imagining Band-Aids over multiple lacerations

Thinking, "I hear the city sigh!" while imagining Andy Warhol  
crossing these bridges in his youth thinking the sky is a fickle color. . .

Thinking bridges are stitches holding the seams together

Thinking what we hope to reattach in our lifetimes  
while ceaselessly imagining or remembering bridges.

**Yong Shu Hoong**  
**Singapore**

---

## Sunnyasi Honeymoon

All these fond objects glow with leaving, casting light  
Like history. This is why monks become homeless;  
This is how you carried me over the threshold,

How you led me into the forest, like a wind  
Sweeping the ground before my feet, exchanging vows  
With every noble tree we pass. Our path is mapped

In the green light sifting through leaf veins, the trenches  
That run through crazed bark. It skirts many villages,  
Laughing at sad lovers and old journeymen, trapped.

When life passes before your eyes on death's threshold,  
Don't think it rewinds, runs fast forward, or pauses  
Any way other than this: breath by breath by breath.

Zara Houshmand  
Austin, Texas

---

## Icon

I want to be the girl  
the one girl walking down the street at night with the B-movie gang of guys  
with the asphalt like diamonds beneath my closed-toe pumps  
the girl with the eyes like smoke and the cigarette in her hand

I want to be the girl  
the girl worth fighting for worth killing and dying for  
the girl that is the singular cause  
of insanity and whiplash and depression and the apocalypse

I want to be the girl  
the girl in the cheap motel in the good black silk slip  
the girl with the tongue like an arsenic-tipped machete  
who takes her whiskey straight

I want to be the girl  
the token female superhero  
I want to be the girl with the flames or the magic lasso  
I want to be the girl who can hold her own  
with the otherwise macho team  
of spies or ex-cons or lawyers or private eyes

I want to be the girl  
the one you think is going to be the damsel in distress  
because she wears silk and smells like perfume  
but turns out to be smarter faster a better shot  
better at poker and at sex  
and it turns out that you, not she, is helpless

I want to be the girl  
the icon, the object of the gaze  
the girl who fills the screen with her presence  
the legend the goddess of all that is desired  
because if I were that girl then  
I would fill the whole world with  
the glory and enigma that is me  
and you — and you — and you  
would not be able to look right through me.

Terri Lynne Hudson  
Austin, Texas

---

## The Offer

He asked me to be his secret  
accept this half measure  
parceled out in mean pieces  
he who would clip my wings  
watches from his own cage

Eileen Hugo  
Stoneham, Massachusetts

---

## Blow-Out: 03:30 A.M.

some mornings at the plant  
are quiet.

03:30, Friday night turned to Saturday,  
no machines running,  
only routines call:  
a hydrogen alarm sounds.  
red bottles lined up on a wooden rack,  
the four feeding the generator  
now empty.

he was four months  
from retirement that night  
when he caught the tipping cylinder,  
then stretched for the block valve —  
and old sewing came loose;  
he clutched the sudden distension  
of his belly  
up the elevator  
on his way to the emergency room  
via the shift supervisor

who'd caught a tipping cylinder  
years ago as its shoulder smashed  
into another breaking finger bone  
in twenty places

instinct saying better this reaction  
than a metal balloon  
of hydrogen let loose  
bottle becoming rocket

thoughts of flying cylinder  
and sparking steel  
exploding the early darkness

Cindy Huyser  
Austin, Texas

---

## The Insight of Oracles

With her brown eyes complementing  
her smile and high cheekbones,  
she sits upright in the monkey-tail chair  
exhibiting such a clarity of elegance.

Draping to the sides of her neck  
are ribbons of hair and oval earrings  
as a golden necklace ornament leads below  
the opened buttonholes of her blouse.

She crosses her left leg over the other  
and tugs a bit on her sleeve,  
then looks at me directly —  
and I understand what oracles perceive.

Glynn Monroe Irby  
Clute, Texas

---

## Crow Dance

The dancers in the center  
Drew everyone's attention:  
New clothes, new beaus, new shoes  
The perfect couples in their rounds.

But I saw plague attendants  
Quarantined in crow suits  
To dance around carnations  
With long masks made of velvet.

The Black Death doesn't scare me.  
I still want what they had:  
A crow suit and a mask,  
Your hand wrapped firm in mine.

I dreamt you every night.  
We danced, and I knew how.  
We talked across the distance,  
And kissed each other gone.

I left alone as always  
With dancers in my dreams,  
An orchid in my hand,  
And tears swelled in my eyelids.

I folded up the orchid  
And dropped my bitter tears  
Inside the Song of Songs  
To this day I keep closed.

The orchid is long withered.  
The dance is long forgotten.  
The tears are grains of salt;  
I wait for you no longer.

I still don't have a crow suit.  
I never learned to dance.  
Still now I know my love  
Could never be so awkward

Abandoned, untouched,  
And silent to still be.

Thomas Jackson  
Derwood, Maryland

---

## Folding

Pleasure inherent  
in forming folds  
intensifies  
as hands brush  
warmth of cotton,  
fresh  
from dryer.

Smoothing strokes  
turn like to like  
aligning edges,  
straightening corners  
into conformity,  
fluffing  
to desired size.

Gentleness necessary  
to sculpt  
woven cotton  
into towers of folds  
calms the mind,  
engages  
spirit's gears.

Jazz Jaeschke  
Austin, Texas

---

## Miles Showed Me His Trumpet

Miles Davis lived around the block from me  
deep in the upper west side of Manhattan Island.

He played like one man could be an island  
living for his horn that paid his daily bread  
living in this house made of gingerbread, on  
West 77th Street while I lived on West 76th.

I would see him every now and again going  
into that brownstone that his horn built.

— I got to meet Miles

Walked round the block, walked round  
the clock where Miles stood outside his  
homestead just proud as peacock.

He told me how much he liked San Francisco women  
because their bottoms were so round not flat  
from riding subways all days, he said with a smile.  
Nudging me, guy hood joke, “You know what I mean.”

We went inside past the New York façade  
into his musical domain —  
headquarters for lonely horn players.

The purity of Miles’ trumpet leans into me,  
he sings it blue. My eyes tear uncontrollably.

He has touched melodies that riff with magic,  
I escape ego with this horn. It is evolution of life  
in notes counterpoint. My fingers feel broken,  
wanting to make the same sounds with words,  
that staccato lip thing that merges horn with man.

— Miles showed me his trumpet  
in this house of sugar-coated dreams.

When I was a kid I dreamed of playing trumpet  
but I wore braces on my teeth. . . they said I would  
cut my lips to ribbons and bleed on my horn.  
I looked up with tears and thought Miles,

Miles always bleeds on his horn

Larry Jaffe  
Los Angeles, California

---

## Breakwater

I walk out to the jetty's end  
that morning after the blow. Town  
is behind me, little more than rubble.  
A sunny yellow rope is threaded between rocks —  
I tug it in. Bobbing up from green deep  
are ninety orphans lashed together.  
Some wear nightshirts with names  
embroidered on the collars, but many  
are missing clothing altogether. We will  
bury them under a single stone, mourn  
as best we can, in moments over the  
coming years. Leave the rest to God.  
We are years behind in the work of love  
Will never catch up

**Maggie Jochild**  
Austin, Texas

Historical Note: The worst natural disaster in U.S. recorded history is the hurricane that struck Galveston without warning on September 8, 1900. More than 6000 people died overnight in this storm, including 90 children from the St. Mary's Orphans' Asylum, who were tied together in a line by the Sisters of Charity in the tragic hope that they could hold onto them as the building fell down. Galveston Island, at near sea level, was virtually scrubbed bare by winds that reached 150-200 mph and a tidal surge of 15-20 feet. A massive seawall now protects Galveston.

---

## Too Old to Fall in Love Again

I'm too old to fall in love again  
In that head-over-heels kind of way  
So when Cupid has thrown his dart  
I don't want my senses blown apart  
Like Moscow was by Bonaparte  
I'm too old to be anxious and jittery  
To feel my heart so jumpy and skittery  
And I've no time for that nervous nittery  
Of falling in love again

Of course that's what I think at this moment  
From a happily married point of view  
But when I'm ninety years old in a sunset home  
I might be joining the queue  
To give flowers to matron in her short starched apron  
Or a ring to the nurse who isn't adverse  
To tucking me in for the night  
And I might feel an urge for the sister's blue serge  
When she bends to turn out my light

### **But**

Today I'm too old to fall in love  
In a floating-on-air kind of way  
Too old to blush and nervously laugh  
Or to count the minutes in the day  
Before I will see her and tell her  
That she is the squeak to my bubble  
And that I am the toad in her hole  
And that she makes my heartbeat double  
Yes, I'm too old today  
Too old to fall  
Too old to fall again.

David C. Johnson  
Bristol, United Kingdom

---

## Thyme for Onions

onions have left fetal tears  
beneath French-tipped fingernails

along with green brother pepper  
and sweet sister ackee

mixing in a lazy yellow river  
down the spicy palm of a new wife

this is not his mama's recipe, no instructions  
came for planting little boys

in a hill of rice and peas  
to cultivate men, men of clay and salt

water willing kidney beans to split  
ready to receive the thyme

make the time to fold new love with old  
in this foreign woman's pepper pot

placed at one bride's bland feet  
quickly stirring — slowly contemplating

the feeling of seasons changing  
kneading dough, needing to mold fresh

offerings for a displaced heart  
still hungry for Kingston

**Amanda Johnston**  
**Elizabethtown, Kentucky**

---

## Burger Heaven

Copernicus  
Ordered the universe  
But he misordered.  
The sun is not the burger  
Perched safely, stately  
At the center  
Circled by planetary buns  
But only a sesame seed  
On the outer rim of one bun  
Amid a tray of Big Macs  
Each careening carelessly  
Expanding haphazardly  
Toward a different mouth  
Black holes indifferently feeding  
On nearby stellar matter  
Like bums sucking ketchup bottles  
Behind McDonald's

**Ken Jones**  
**Houston, Texas**

---

## Ode to the Eggplant

A much misunderstood creature,  
The eggplant is like an exile.  
The tongue of its deep purple  
Mouth, trapped in the bitterness  
Of those who cannot speak.

Poor eggplant — even your name  
Compromises your beauty.  
Like a wayward traveler  
Arriving at Ellis Island,  
Someone took one look at you  
And declared: “Eggplant!”  
If only they’d spoken French,  
And had written *aubergine* instead.

Your American name belies your mystery.  
You are an egg, yes, but also the curve  
Of a human calf, a shiny black phallus  
In the starkness of day.  
You are the waxy underbelly of a bird,  
The slope of a mountain,  
Smooth stones from the bottom of a river.

How could they have missed  
Your taste in the appellation?  
You are neither animal nor vegetable,  
But your flavor is requited love —  
The thing that makes all others complete:  
Garlic, tomato, lentil, lamb, rice.  
Olive oil would simply be lost without you.

And the heat from which you are born  
Is the heat you unleash  
In the slow simmer of sauce and stew  
That gathers people to an intimate table.

Persis M. Karim  
Berkeley, California

---

## House

I live in an old house with good bones  
Wood bones — it is all wood —  
Slow to cool when the first  
Blue norther blows in  
It can take all day before I feel the chill

When we polish the old bones  
They reveal an East Texas forest:  
*Pinus palustris*, *Pinus taeda*, *Pinus echinata*  
*Pseudotsuga Menziessi*  
(Longleaf yellow pine, Loblolly pine, Short-leaf yellow pine  
Douglas fir)  
Denizens of sand and marsh  
Once growing side by side  
Now shiplapped groove to groove

Seventy-three years ago  
Craftsmen penciled notes to each other:  
“Phone Coffey 3498” is scribbled on several planks  
I try to imagine them  
Hammering the skeleton together  
I add my botanical nomenclature to the door jamb

Sometimes in the evening, I step inside a darkening room and  
Listen for its history  
My winter days begin & end with stars  
My old house embraces me

Ingrid Karklins  
Austin, Texas

---

## Hands (Parkinson's)

I close my eyes  
I am a child again playing by the river  
patting mud pies into shape  
my hands all flesh all dimples  
a rubber doll's hands  
I am being dragged away  
my hand trapped in my big sister's hand  
She takes me back to the quilt  
spread out on the grass  
wipes the mud off my hands  
She laughs, kisses my palms  
calls me "Butter Hands"  
We eat fried fish, still warm  
She pulls the white flesh off the bones  
gives it to me  
We eat with our fingers  
I touch her hands  
Where my dimples are, she has bumps  
like baby goats have on their heads

Now the nurse cranks up the bed  
pours a white pill from the cup onto my tongue  
The pill never touches her fingers  
She fills the cup with water  
brings it to my mouth again  
I swallow. I can't help myself  
My hands, a tangle of knuckles and blue veins  
are not mine anymore  
Day and night  
they toil for the restless genie  
who lives in their flesh

Marcelle Kasprovicz  
Austin, Texas

---

## Georgia Toll 400

I used to pay a dollar a day to see you,  
the toll booth basket a perpetual open throat.  
Although I never kept track of the money,  
the miles driven to be alternately adored  
and ignored, those visits took their toll.  
Ultimately you gave me up, like loose change  
sucked out of a pocket in the spin cycle.  
Every time I drive that road now,  
have to fish out fifty cents for each way,  
I think of that old fairy tale of paying the troll  
to cross the bridge, imagine you hiding  
just inside the basket where the coins circle  
like a drain. You have moved away, but I resent  
the clink and clatter, the arm that holds me at bay,  
the need for permission to pass unfleeced.

Collin Kelley  
Atlanta, Georgia

---

## If I Had a Garden of Dreams

I'd plant you, because blood  
oranges cannot compare to the  
color of you between my teeth and  
even coconut's milk is not sweeter than  
yours on my tongue, and even still,  
fresh ground cinnamon cannot compete  
with the kiss of your lips on my skin,  
so much more pleasing to the palate than  
anything any garden here on earth could  
ever hope to offer.

T. Keyser  
San Antonio, Texas

---

## Out of the Night

Kay sees their chairs  
sail over the street as Joe's  
anger mounts.  
Dust motes seem to gather in clouds  
darkening all.  
A piano plays as it passes by,  
the musician invisible.  
Waves of crescendos climax  
as the music accents the mood.  
Kay's mind leaps to the sway  
just as the rhythm is played.  
Her whisper is heard:  
"Darling, dearest love, when?"

Peggy Zuleika Lynch  
Austin, Texas

---

## Compass, Gauge, Container

They have taken the cornfield and left  
the corn. There is no life here now  
without soil or water — only zealous sun.  
No way to measure time even. I left you  
with three instruments. Either you or  
I have them now. Many things are  
vague like that, misplaced: corn without  
field, fervor without original breath. There  
is much tilling yet to do — the soil has been  
parched for days. But I remember wetness.  
I remember corn in a field, remember three  
instruments, their usefulness, my grip.

Jenna Martin  
Austin, Texas

---

## No More Brooms

This is the day to bury the last of the women  
whose tight fists gripped wooden poles  
above stiff fans of hand-stitched straw,  
wives who pushed and pulled dust  
into meager piles across dirt-grained floors  
before everything went dark.

Black-suited men are reciting eulogies  
of *abuelas* and *babushkas* who sipped  
soup from spoons held with fingers calloused  
from hours of cold-water lye soap scrubbing,  
their grim children and distant husbands  
raw from the scour of never-enough.

Tomorrow, there will be no curled shoulders  
to fall exhausted onto loose-sacked mattresses  
cradled by wooden planks; no lips  
to whimper prayers into bundles of cloth  
asking God for deliverance from a life  
that is no life for their daughters.

In the rubble of what was once a room,  
now there will be no more brooms, no more  
stingy tubs of water, no more troubles passed  
around among neighbors like potatoes  
served by women in steamy kitchens, hungry  
for their turn to come to the table to eat.

Anne McCrady  
Henderson, Texas

---

## Upon Discovering, Behind the Wedding Chapel, A Burial Mound for Dancing Shoes

Saturday afternoon, Latino men  
congregate in the parking lot  
to swill Dos Equis and wax  
their El Caminos and Chevy vans.

Laughter punctuates the syncopated  
rhythms of guitars and trumpets  
blaring from jam box speakers  
as one peels off his tee shirt

performing a macho mock striptease  
exposing a belly  
swollen with refried beans  
and corn tortillas.

The women cluck their tongues  
and wonder what became  
of Jalisco peacocks parading their ladies  
to mariachi serenades.

Stazja McFadyen  
Clearwater, Florida

---

## The Memory of Water

Silent now,  
It holds the memory of stones,  
Curling over their slate brown shoulders,  
Smoothing away the pain of fragmentation with a curving touch,  
Forging a pristine coiling path,  
Mole-blind and shapeless,  
Mute except when falling,  
Restless with thoughts of roots and smiling Narcissus,  
Leaping to be first at the dam.

Still now,  
It remembers Friday nights by the hearthside,  
Old tin baths unhooked from washroom doors,  
And infants wriggling, slippery with soap,  
Frills of foam ornamenting their tiny bellies,  
Dad breathing beer and sawdust,  
And brothers and sisters bending under the weight of rainfall  
As they run past coal-thickened canals  
Lacking even the ghosts of fish.

Smooth now,  
It considers the tears of women  
As they walk through bee-heavy heather,  
Steepled together for comfort,  
Keening for sorrow of love lost at sea,  
Their grief reflecting the raucous “Why? Why? Why?” of herring gulls  
Soaring above the relentless fidget of indigo swell,  
Present in that small comma of attendance  
Personifying pain.

Silent, still, smooth,  
It peers from the kaleidoscopic bottoms of wells,  
Trapped in moonlight,  
Waiting for the body of winter.

Agnes Meadows  
London, United Kingdom

---

## Jeanne Marie Writes a New Book

When it rains in Biggar, Saskatchewan,  
a much bigger battle begins

Grass and grain sucking  
straws to the slurping point

The sun trying as always to exact  
more than his fair tithe

Muddy waters swirling down drains  
of gopher and badger holes

Settling through bottoms of buffalo wallows  
where the buffalo no longer roam

Remainders feeding underground streams  
and deep raging rivers

If I put my feet or my ear to the earth  
I can almost understand her last poem

Almost hear the next one

Neil Meili  
Austin, Texas, and  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

---

## Mailman in the Rain

Your pit bull has his teeth  
in my Achilles tendon. I'd like to brood a bit,  
lie down in heavy-curtained morning darkness, sip  
*coffee stale and cold from the mug that squats*  
beside my bedside ashtray. Wouldn't mind  
repairing the broken bathroom doorknob  
the wife asked me to fix I forget  
how many weeks ago. Right now, I'd even  
trade places with a pipe fitter, embrace  
his dark despair. But I'm stuck  
*inside your chicken-scratch yard*  
one step past a worn out tire you planted  
dead center with geraniums. They weep  
this morning with embarrassment,  
and I'm cold beneath this steady gray  
midmorning winter rain  
one step short of your gateless  
*chain link fence. I want to sink to my knees,*  
curl up beside the sad geraniums. Comfort them.  
Give up. But there's your pit bull  
to be reckoned with. A mailman pulls away by habit.

David Meischen  
Austin, Texas

---

## Soma Delusion

Aquarius spills a bit of the great elixir  
upon the ground for the mutt who's  
panting in the summer heat.  
The good dog laps at the liquid, as anything,  
quenching desperation, careless of the magic.  
Blessings lost on baseness.  
Necessity is the mother of devotion.  
Inclusive to the recluse,  
an elusive hallucination.  
Awesome illusions of lucid reduction.

Matthew Mendez  
San Antonio, Texas

---

## Breath Steps

The most depth-defining moment  
is the death-defying walk  
a woman takes  
from the threshold of her house  
when the nuptials  
are on the kitchen table  
and the children in the car  
running

Carole Metellus  
Austin, Texas

---

## *Agua Caliente*. . . Hot Water

In the middle of the desert  
past the city limit signs  
the air tastes of caliche dust;  
the river runs dry.  
Green rows of creosote  
smell like rain  
when there's not a drop of moisture  
in the sky.  
Brown pods on the yucca  
bloom into white petals  
that fall like snow at  
100 degrees. Asphalt sizzles  
in the heat as the sun's rays reflect light  
seemingly in Morse Code from  
the chrome wheels of  
a pickup truck making a weekly delivery —  
50-gallon drums labeled "*agua*"  
that once held lethal chemicals.  
People run to greet the driver.  
The neighborhood, *la colonia*,  
was built from cinderblocks and  
two-by-fours fortified with  
concrete dreams and seas of sweat.  
Garden hoses serve as  
siphons to pails  
for the life-giving liquid,  
each drop a promise  
for a better life.  
Pails are carried to homes  
with tin roofs and dirt floors where  
kettles boil on propane stoves.  
In the morning *los ninos*,  
the children, cannot see the prophecy  
in dead moths that float like fishermen on top of the water.

Donna Marie Miller  
Austin, Texas

---

## Steadfast Souls

It takes a steady hand to steer a boat  
through a storm when others can't  
help at the helm.

A lonely, stressful task can overwhelm,  
when giving all to keep something  
afloat.

Caregivers muster inner strength and  
devote time and can bend like limbs  
of an elm to needs of loved ones in  
another realm.

Thinking clearly, walking, donning a coat,  
most take for granted,  
but caregivers know normalcy in daily  
functions can't be.

It is kind when neighbors help relieve woe  
by reading to the blind or using free  
time to help caregivers  
when they are low.

It takes steadfast souls to help others  
in need during a stormy sea.

**Betty Mol**  
**Austin, Texas**

---

## Revision

But now it is again the time of June bugs  
clinging to window screens, scudding down  
to the sills to collect in the peeling paint  
with the smell of cornmeal and catfish. Hush  
puppies. No, that was childhood: pink fingers  
curled onto the rungs of ladderbacks, wide  
eyes listening to the women's talk, unaware  
of being or becoming one of them. I have  
been eavesdropping again, imagining myself  
one of you now. Why did we not all grow hard  
russet shells, curl in spindly limbs and cannonball  
onto the red dust below a shuttered window?  
In autumn the days melt from the lingering  
heat of August; the sky drops into the dry  
grass, bewildered by its impotent fire. Qualifiers  
and silence panting what is best left, unsaid in summer.

Katherine Durham Oldmixon  
Austin, Texas

---

## Cathedral Ceilings

the summer was saturated in drama deep walls.  
the owl came to perch upon the fence,  
the guides contemplated other lifetimes where lessons were kinder.

then, we met the river.  
the river took delight in us  
cradling us with clear, easy, morning-cool waters  
offering gifts  
a hat, a turtle, a wooden bracelet,  
and stained glass windows full of sunlight through arbored cathedral  
ceilings.  
each rush of water was as if river hands were swaying us  
with the Buddha tugging gently at the Christ for our souls.

the river shared her tales of former storms  
a tree limb lodged beneath the bridge,  
her wealth of coined offerings that dotted her depths like silvered suns.  
she began to share with us her secrets  
as we trusted the gentle swirl of braided currents, learning one day  
the grace of knowing we were loved.

the end of summer came and so the gentle currents that eased us  
along.  
there were no more vined edges to steady us  
or white water to measure the timing of our breaths.  
who would hear her secrets now?  
who would tunnel our humanity through concrete encasements  
to exorcise our demons?

the end of summer silenced us like ripples  
betraying us with autumn and winter binding with its walls.  
the owl would never come again,  
but love does come in seasons as will summer come again.

**Tommie Ortega**  
**Austin, Texas**

---

## They Were Dead Black

They were dead black, and it was this rich,  
Thick tar, black darkness that jarred me.

It stood out, oddly solid, a striking, stark, slick  
Of black perched on a white limestone bluff

Four vultures huddled, hungrily.  
At first I couldn't see to what

These jet-winged scavengers attended:  
They hung back, jumpily.

Then I saw the doe, wide-eyed, stricken but braced,  
in an agitation that blocked their path to her fallen fawn.

I felt the janitors' anticipation in its infant-soft lifelessness.  
Strange that these swarthy, eager-eyed birds

Accepted the death before she did.  
Cleaning it up was, after all, their daily bread.

And they would wait, black caretakers  
Of some other mother, these earth's morticians,

Accepting the beginning and ending of everything  
As a dipping out of, and back into, her deep, loamy lap.

But not the doe: everything in her was ministering to life.  
The lurking vultures sensed it, and stayed back.

Living black witnesses to a mother primed,  
A doe not done tending to the life of her dead fawn.

**Joy Palmer**  
Austin, Texas

---

## Half a Lime

His pen moves as fast as darkness scatters.  
Three fleshy creases mark his forehead  
as he leans pensively forward  
like a question mark filled with life.

*The cocks have crowed, in the streets  
brooms raise dust. I rise early.*

I want to be the first to see him  
smile, see his small, white teeth  
expose themselves without inhibition  
like nudists on a beach of gums.

*Pigeons gather. . . the sun summons  
its light. I head outside.*

I can see him before I see him:  
yesterday's paper to his left,  
a pen in his right hand  
and sheaves of paper awaiting stains.

*The dew rises like fleeting  
possibilities in the new heat.*

He's waiting. I like the song he hums:  
the tenor harmony of a Jimmy Smith solo.  
Silent, he passes his clean mug to me.  
We'll talk between hot sips of tea.

*The kettle boils, loaded  
bubbles of speech waiting to burst.*

I make two cups: black, no sugar  
with half a lime squeezed in each.  
His mouth forms a vaginal shape as he sips  
the heat, the promise of a new day.

*Something warm passes from father to son.  
Silence becomes an enduring memory.*

And this week, I buy seven perfect limes. One  
for every new day. I will slice them in two  
each morning, squeeze one half for me, and one  
half into an empty cup. For the memories.

Nii Ayikwei Parkes  
London, United Kingdom

---

## Man Seeking HOT BODY

*. . . For my beloved husband, Guy*

Man seeking HOT BODY  
Surfing worldwide web  
White or black, he doesn't care  
He'll paint you cherry red

Older model? That's okay  
He loves your classic lines  
Wants to make you his obsession  
Rubs your chassis in his mind

He'd love to take you home  
And caress your sexy curves  
Manipulate your inner parts  
Until your motor purrs

He'll dress you up and take you out  
Parade you to the world  
Then soak up all the rave reviews  
You're such a pretty girl

Yes, man seeking HOT BODY  
Checking prices as he drools  
Wife just sighs and shakes her head  
Plans gifts of auto tools

**Angela Patterson**  
**Austin, Texas**

---

## Still Life, With Solstice

Garrison in branches, I present the vitrine  
of ivy pressed into jewelry — a blue heart  
marked by redder weather. There is still  
money to love the fish in their still water districts.

There is no heaven I won't grant. Red skies  
all around the vault, red skies hover over  
a heavysset mausoleum. Muster the home  
for the government of blues. All my friends

are here; I am penitent. Whispered vespers  
lost in argument — there is no heaven too precious,  
no pediment. Welcome the variegated honey,  
the warmth collected by bricks, by architect.

George was right about the toads — the gleesome  
acrobat vaults into heaven, into water — the Neptune  
bruise of content. There is no muddy too blessed.  
I'd say that heaven will love him, straightways

into a room too perfumed for loveliness, into  
a passion fanatic. Fish muddle where insects  
finger the surface — we are desperate  
for our own derelict heaven.

Deborah Wardlaw Pattillo  
Mission, Texas

---

## Elegy

I wanted to find you, smashed  
and perfect like a penny  
on the railroad tracks  
after the wheels have stretched  
the engravings into elegance,  
not your old, round self:  
raised face and scratches  
to worry at in my pocket.

Alice Pettway  
Houston, Texas

---

## Second Poem for Dillon, Colorado

a rocky mountain morning  
with a vista like a beer can label  
an arm wrapped around my arm  
just a day ago

now back in town  
a town  
not my town  
but it'll do for now  
and the weather's threat of sweaters  
has come true

in a coffee shop's outdoor table  
that has become my spot  
for haphazard documentation  
with a cigarette, a book, and too much sugar

and the space between my arm and side  
is just a space  
the chairs around my table are empty  
as i overanalyze the night before  
and the morning lacking all  
that made the previous mornings  
feel so good

dillon grows in sentiment  
with every kiss  
as the end comes closer  
an end  
some end  
that will probably never do  
but the weather's threat of sweaters  
has finally come true

**Carl Polgar**  
Nashville, Tennessee

---

## Dostoevsky's Voice

Dostoevsky brings me back to life.  
He pops up everywhere —  
waving the flag, urging me on.  
How he does it, I don't know.  
From time to time, I hear his voice  
but when I look around, he turns away.

He is reaching for his pen  
amid the frozen steppes, his winter sheets  
the tree-lined streets of St. Petersburg.  
Then he is silent, intent, all ears:  
as if, out of his wintry depths  
he hears me too, urging him on.

From time to time, I look out my window  
but there are only waves, trees  
a clocktower and some ships.  
I see no sign of him but meet his voice  
in the sounds of the street:  
in the workers' talk, the factory whistle  
and a ship's horn booming in from the deep.

**Ron Riddell**  
Naenae, Wellington, New Zealand

---

## Red Rainboots for Joseph Cornell

We hold séances in special collections,  
we savor the foulings,  
the strays.  
We exorcise the limits.

*There are more mollusks  
in my throat  
than ever before.*

The unconscious possession takes us  
to wax museums  
where public radio  
yearns to trap  
young constellations  
in the red rainboots,  
now worn  
by our bereaving psychic,  
the one who burns  
his incense  
in our fine bottles of sand.

Our fine  
bottles  
of lichen.

Oh, ramshackle,  
ramshackle your prairie,  
so like a sea amoeba,  
you may squirt back.

You may hold your flute in the palm  
and blow gently on the boulder —  
find that little girl trapped underneath.

Concentrate,  
for a blow of violence  
saves no one.

Jennifer Rogers  
Boulder, Colorado

---

## Regurgitated Poetry

*. . . for Lorraine*

I left myself in El Paso for you,  
in the cracked and weeping skin  
of the desert's brown and the cacti in bloom,  
by the tickling trickle of a brown stream  
that's blue,

I left myself in stickers and hot sand  
hot enough for two;

by the lonely hills of San Antonio that ache  
into a city that turns yellow, pink and green,  
I tend to wake, to fly by night  
to tiny wooden coffee houses  
of tabby cats and men in women's blouses  
where I can write of El Paso's lines  
as lines upon a face or a hand  
for sand-colored hands to trace;

near the downy crests of wood side lakes,  
I lay in wake and wait for me and you  
to test the high noon dunes of El Paso  
dipping and cresting in all their Latin hue  
and the various peaks erect and valleys submissive  
like the innocent geography of myself, like you,  
losing ourselves in San Antonio nighttime  
of lights connected to lights  
tracing downtown in its pointed gaze  
and penetrating night

where you are found within the city  
and out,  
gathering me in and scattering me about  
like phrases on the wind  
speaking with the tremolo of a wrinkled chin,  
words iterated by night owls who wail and shout  
in seedy bars or the cacti of the western south,  
I left myself in the blistered desert  
hallucinating mirages of you  
walking beneath a yellow sun,  
the oasis dried through.

Michael Romero  
San Antonio, Texas

---

## The Day's Bouquet

It was a gorgeous day standing in the doorway  
Mentally fixed to a stare upon a remarkable panacea  
Of blooming fruit trees, flowers, groveling insects,  
Flying things, and I heard birds chirping  
Saw bumblebees busy their pollination of flowers  
The petals vivid in colors exotic shades vibrant hues  
A bouquet grand display of flora varieties risen up  
From the earth's crust in planting beds that transition  
In coming months to small cemetery lot squares  
Nature's way it shares the land with life and death  
Seasonal tit for tat all the while bumblebees buzzing in flight  
Ignoring the morning's doodlebugs rummaging around  
The army ants patrolling in the dirt below my office window  
Catching a view of a scene taking place on the adjacent avenue  
There the *raspa* man selling sparkling bright ice  
To the numerous neighborhood children  
All of them having been adorned in the flesh  
With their parents' respective ethnic colors and tints.

Chip Ross  
Austin, Texas

---

## Dreams Always in Color

She can't see enough anymore to sew,  
but younger friends still can —  
save her remnants and bits of braid,  
yarns and rickracks put aside in sacks,  
stowed beneath her bed, winter dreams,  
dreams always in color.

Early spring, she scatters salvaged pieces  
like birdseed across her yard,  
frees fabric to the whim of wind —  
pleased by confettied grass,  
she revisits dreams around her hearth,  
dreams always in color.

Every year, grandchildren arrive for Easter,  
resurrect her spirits and look for colored eggs,  
of course, delight in hues above their heads —  
nests in boughs flutter, flicker, rock  
the cradle with dreams of flight,  
dreams always in color.

Anne Schneider  
Hunt, Texas

---

## Swimming for It

It is only a parable, but  
we all wanted to be Noah  
without being good  
at least not good enough.

So, when the flood came  
we were left  
paddling outside the ark  
as innocuously as fishes.  
Soon enough, we developed lungs  
to rage at heaven.

It is only a fairy tale  
but we are all Pinocchio,  
in the belly of the whale  
building fires to make society sneeze  
so that we can be spun out  
back on the path  
to becoming real.

It is only a story  
but, like Alice, we grew large  
up and up, filled with ourselves.  
Startled at the size  
we cried into our tea

until we were depleted.  
We regressed, became tiny again  
amoebic, floating in amniotic fluid  
drowning in spilled tears  
until we reached the shore

became marooned in forgiveness  
learned to grow native flowers  
to make rain.

Rowena Silver  
Riverside, California

---

## Genius of Patience

The abacus is her mind,  
her ancient measurements  
slide into place until the machine falls and dies  
a discarded species killed by the mind's natural selection.

It is a genius of patience  
(someone asks you to present the blade of your soul)  
which asks you if you are humanity  
and asks you if God had not been killed by science  
but simply died of exposure,  
would she come to  
the same conclusion?

You are humanity  
and you stare at the wall  
waiting for an answer.

Scott Sloan  
Taos, New Mexico

---

## To Be

When I think of the end of my life, I hope  
it comes slowly as unraveling threads  
of granddaddy's blue silk robe. Leisurely  
as his sitting in the early morning hour  
eating a plate of peppered cucumbers and tomatoes  
glazed with oil and vinegar, remembering tales  
he told his grandchildren about singing  
"The Lord's Prayer" on the radio. Hitting high C.  
I reminisce the day after he died. Crept  
through his window. Crossed dusty seams  
like a seasoned robber. Slipped in and out  
shadowed rooms, light spilling through curtains.  
Hand against my face, I shielded light  
the way he might have done before or  
after he died. I found his robe  
strewn across the countertop as if thrown in haste.  
Last act before death. I traced the outside seams.  
Felt the cold silk against my fingertips.  
I entered through the sleeves, bearing the weight  
of the robe on my back. I prayed to be swallowed.  
To become his body. To be the silk-like skin hanging from his bones.

D. Antwan Stewart  
Austin, Texas

---

## To Enchant a Garden

On a night the new moon  
is chased by witch-struck clouds,  
throw a rose into the air  
and bury a silver spoon  
where it lands. Write the name  
of your lover in the mulch  
with the index finger of your left hand.

Light a luminaria for each pet  
that has preceded you into the afterglow.  
Arrange the luminarias in a circle and  
walk around them three times  
in a counter-clockwise direction.  
If an owl hoots in the distance, whisper  
the name of your mother until it stops.

In the northeast corner of the garden  
release a firefly from a glass jar  
while reciting a love poem. Fill the jar  
with freshly cut rosemary leaves  
and bury it near a potted plant.  
Mark the pot with a large X, drawn  
with a branch from the rosemary plant.

Make a wish for all your children  
while breathing on a silk scarf  
which has been passed twice  
over the unopened buds of a rose bush.  
Unfold the scarf with a gentle flourish  
and tie it in the branches of a large tree  
while saying your favorite colors.

Invoking the names of St. Christopher and  
St. Francis, turn a full circle in each direction  
and return to your house through an unlit door.  
No evil will ever visit your garden. It will  
always be a place of peace and harmony  
which you can visit throughout the season  
and in your dreams on cold winter nights.

**Dr. Charles A. Stone**  
Austin, Texas

---

## Rude Bears

Big,  
hairy brutes  
tromp on the hardwood floors  
by the dresser,  
sniff the lamp,  
bat at the fan  
overhead,  
steal beer from the fridge  
while my dreams grip me hard  
w/drenched sheets  
wrapped 'round my feet

even as my new roommates  
clamber in bed  
w/me,  
sandwich me  
between paw and gristle,  
heavy, wet breath in my ear  
suffocates my attempts  
to move them on their sides,  
stop the freight train  
snores  
that cause me to quit  
my vision-racked sleep  
until I move to the living room  
where the chipmunks,  
for a change,  
are willing to share  
the couch.

Rod C. Stryker  
San Antonio, Texas

---

## His Virginia Woolf

Even innocents recognize  
that he worships her  
paying ritual homage  
in hopeful ways

antique leather  
for her Christmas car  
birthday roses in baby pink  
Valentine chocolates

those gourmet truffles  
packaged half and half  
milky tans, his favorites  
bittersweet browns, hers.

He selects two boxes  
then rearranges them  
one box of all lights  
the other, all darks.

He would like to offer her  
a mix, a chalice made for sharing  
but he knows she wants only  
a box of her own.

Mary-Agnes Taylor  
Austin, Texas

---

## Fold-In #6

your reason suggests caught sight  
without Lucinda, hawthorns  
her to be another's masterpieces  
to misery take in  
elected a moment  
comply fingers into a frame  
lacked obscure wretches  
impossible to float across free itself  
Here concluded longing  
we feel just as the priests  
consolation different from any  
mournful still some one  
narrative of a picture  
knights look at this pink one  
earth lost where flowers were  
today our white present in holiday  
only the delights only true  
episodes not appointed by  
authentic holidays appointed  
carded, twisted, ordained  
vented a voice more richly  
Oh God, its possible branches  
secret graves wear the tree undecorated  
bear the crooked rococo

[Cervantes meets Proust]

Hugh Tribbey  
Ada, Oklahoma

---

## On the Seventh Day

Seven days before  
you couldn't have convinced me  
some communicate without words,  
billboard big, through sterile walls,  
down winding roads, past post offices.  
I, padding though the den barefooted,  
feet falling upon cool tile,

thinking, "Okay, Mama. What is it?  
What is taking you so damned long to die?  
Tell me, just WHAT is the problem?"  
Callous of me, I admit,  
but a true and lucid thought.

But then words not of my voice nor my making  
rose up like the huge signboard on Eastbound I-10  
that announces, "WE NEED TO TALK — GOD."

Only this wasn't God. It was Mother!  
And she was peeved! This preciseness  
that prickled at the nape announced,  
"You don't have a proper suit picked out!  
You don't have my earrings, and a pin to match!"

Stunned for a moment, but not surprised, I nodded, walked  
into the closet, selected two:  
one deepest red, one blue to match  
eyes that would not be seen again.

Claiborne Schley Walsh  
Montrose, Alabama

---

## Camping Next to Tombstones

Star-route drifter, netherworld voyager,  
rafting in the fog without hands,  
shooting stars fall through the memory of red plaid shirts,  
bumping the top of redwoods with mist that was elbow  
or your wide, ruddy knee.

Are you left with memory enough to see the days of our house  
in the early Los Angeles suburbs where the patient neighbor fried  
donuts for the tangled urchins gathered  
on the cold sweep of the back porch  
and rocked soft little girls on his knee in the dark order  
of his carpenter garage under the stare of pegboard?

Do those days nag, tying you to earth while you speed  
in your cloud-camper touring skies?

We pitched Army surplus tents on the rough bramble  
of Big Bear Mountain;

you waded out to paradise with your fishing pole  
while small, hidden eyes watched from the shore thickets—  
The deep child heart pulled taut along the silver line  
that disappeared, translucent, in the no-bottom lake.

In unannounced dreams you laugh in my kitchen,  
roaring against yellow cupboards,  
breathing heirloom diamonds into an open palm:  
curious baggage from the stout-hearted.

Trailing mist and sky dust, I lurch into your grandchildren's bleary  
morning, a clockwork of Cheerios, *The Penguin Papers*,  
and sturdy geometry you will never see.

Over your missing shoulder the past crackles  
chill as the rushing streams of icy fish—  
ancient sonatas carved in forest bark.  
The lake still waits for the fly fisherman.

You took your secret selves with you  
Unveiling the best ones to the applause of stars.

Arlene Wedgwood  
Windsor, California

---

## Citizen Eagle

departments of eagles sleep in time to the outside thunder  
and organs with old-timey tenor gospel are  
casting curses to dispel days of doubting direction of self

and I am asking  
the eagles to fly through the chunked locks of my hair  
and greet me welcome to their flight patterns

light reflects and refracts between  
their choraled wings and my choraled arms  
(together we could birth leagues of angels)

I wish from them  
a conversation of inaudible sensical-touches  
I would trade all my breaths to be a feather  
on the chest that shields just one of their lungs

breathe in  
wish out  
breathe in  
wish out

breathe in  
because I am without them  
and wish to take them internally

internalize the sky  
through internalizing its citizens

come, citizen eagle  
guided by choirs of oxygen  
inside  
so that you may keep this person warm

**Jenny White**  
Austin, Texas

---

## Japanese Maple

Three feet tall, anchored by two stakes,  
the stripling tottered out of the dirt,  
bare as a wishbone. The least quake  
would seem capable of rendering it inert.

I was convinced by early December  
that the sapling had breathed its last,  
was nothing but a sham, a deceiver,  
a memento of a once promising past.

You continued to water the scrawny stick  
long after I'd have stopped. When spring  
kicked in like a rambunctious maverick,  
the stripling, the lifeless switch of nothing,

unfurled its leaves, delicate and maroon.  
It seems I doubted you both too soon.

Scott Wiggerman  
Austin, Texas

---

## New Year's Resolutions After Cancer Surgery

Instead of trying to improve  
by deprivation,  
this year I resolve to

eat sushi  
wear dangling earrings  
drink champagne  
blow bubbles  
laugh more  
wear bold colors and bright lipstick  
use fancy soaps and lacy lingerie (what am I saving them for?)  
catch that art exhibit or play or movie before it's gone  
and when I think I won't like the song on the radio I'll listen to it  
anyway.

Be grateful.  
Love those I love.

**Jill Wiggins**  
Austin, Texas

---

## *Azza* — The Ceremony of Grief

Women in black rock  
their bodies, beat their chests,  
girl-children serve, in glass  
tumblers, steaming auburn tea,  
baklava on plastic trays.

Here, tears flow like streams,  
wet the ornate Persian rugs  
and in the courtyard —  
where she poured kerosene on her head, struck a match —  
silver fish roam the small pond oblivious,  
tears soak into the soil where nothing grows  
but sad sprigs of bitter herbs.

On the other side of the yard men sit  
with hookah pipes, crack salted pistachios.

The butcher who was to take the girl as bride  
now sits on an embroidered cushion, strokes his twisting gray mustache.

**Sholeh Wolpé**  
**Redlands, California**

---

## Waking Up to Find My Wife Sleeping in Another Room

I wonder if I should wake her and ask why  
she's not with me, but then I remember

some nights the moon doesn't show up at all —  
the clouds could be too thick, or the stars

not soft enough, or the sun could be snoring  
so loud not even the horizon can lay flat.

I wouldn't ask the moon where it had gone  
so I will leave my wife where she is

and hope that in the morning I am still the sun  
and we can at least pass by each other

as we take our appointed places once again  
in our daughter's wide sky.

Robert Wynne  
Fort Worth, Texas

---

## Barrio Poem #1

There is something beautiful about the barrio just before night falls.  
A thousand beer bottles dropped or thrown to the ground  
in the parking lot of the barrio elementary school  
where a thousand *vato locos* would meet to drink and curse  
over a thousand births or a thousand deaths.  
They've swept away all those pieces of broken glass  
but in the rough texture of asphalt  
a thousand tiny fragments hide in cracks and crevices  
glowing as the sun sets  
reflecting beautifully like a thousand possibilities  
reflecting helplessly like a thousand memories  
that want more than anything just to be found.

There is something beautiful about the barrio just before night falls.  
A thousand children will ride with their *abuelos*  
to state penitentiaries to visit men  
who stopped being their fathers oh so long ago —  
the pine forests surrounding the prison,  
the mortar, the barbed wire, the electrified fence —  
all this will dissolve away to nothingness  
as we return home to our barrio  
which loves us and our fathers not in spite of our faults  
but because of them.

There is something beautiful about the barrio just before night falls.  
A thousand *mocosos*, skin every shade of brown under the sun,  
dance in front yards in wide concentric circles  
absorbing the sun's last rays —  
dark, wild-eyed children  
who a thousand years ago  
would have been Nahuatl pole dancers  
dart about like a thousand flights of fancy  
that might become a thousand poems  
that may or may not change the world.  
These magic *niños del noche* know  
what I thought only the *viejitos* knew:

Everything in life desperately wants to be a circle or a poem.

Joaquín Zihuatanejo  
Denton, Texas

---

## About the Editorial Committee

**Vicki Goldsberry** is the three-year editor of *di-vêrse'-city*, the anthology of the Austin International Poetry Festival. A native Houstonian, she has been a member of the board of directors since 2001. She is also Poetry Editor of the online journal *C/Oasis*, and combines careers as a realtor, writer, and editor. In the last few years she has interviewed such luminaries as Robert Bly, Coleman Barks, and Ursula LeGuin for the television program *Texas Nafas*.

A former spelling champion, she holds degrees in marketing and public relations from the University of Texas. As a poet known for her performances, she attempts to sound a universal note with her audience, evoking both emotional response and a recognition of our connections with each other.

**Barbara Youngblood Carr**, author/storyteller/humorist/musician, has authored nine books of poetry/prose and short stories based on her Native American Cherokee heritage and her Southern upbringing. Her latest book, *Quilted Memories With Our Ancestors*, is the third book in her Ancestor Series — all funded by the City of Austin Arts Commission. Host of Borders-on-the-Word poetry venue for over ten years, she also facilitates workshops at bookstores and creative workshops in many area schools and retirement centers. She has served on the Austin International Poetry Festival Board for 12 years and is a member of many creative/writing organizations. Published on three continents, she lives in Austin, Texas.

**Carlyn Luke Reding**, a sixth-generation Texan with Native American roots stretching to south Louisiana, lives in Austin. She earned degrees at the University of Texas and the University of Houston/Clear Lake. She currently practices poetry and conducts creativity workshops. Her experience includes judging adult, college, high school, and elementary school poetry contests, including those of the Poetry Society of Texas. She is published in *Texas Quotable Women*, *Texas Poetry Calendar 2005*, *Antonelli's River Inn*, and in several *di-vêrse'-city* anthologies. She is anticipating the spring 2005 publication of her second poetry collection, *Freeport Bottle Works*.

---

## About the Artist

The vibrant and unique artistic style of Laura Lopez Cano is haunting, penetrating, and memorable. Whether painting on canvas, wood, or dried gourds, she can convey pathos and whimsy in the same artwork. Adept in many mediums, including acrylic paint, oil pastels, watercolors, and oil pencils, her current paintings feature the bold beauty of Hispanic women in striking oversized canvases. These images convey Latina beauty, strength, and pride.

Ms. Cano has exhibited her work in many galleries and shows throughout Texas and the United States, receiving “best of show” honors. She has been commissioned to produce artwork for several national Hispanic leadership organizations. In 2002 she was named YWCA Woman of the Year, in the Art Category.

Laura Lopez Cano received a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the University of Texas at El Paso, and continued her studies in fashion illustration at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. She has taught college-level classes in both the United States and Mexico, as well as private art classes at her studio in Austin, Texas.

Actively involved in the community, Ms. Cano volunteers with local charities and participates in community events. She has served as an active board member for local non-profit organizations and has contributed artwork to several local organizations.

---

## About the Designer

Glynn M. Irby has created graphic designs for newsprint advertising, books, and manuscripts, including graphics for ten books of poetry. He is a professional interior designer and also belongs to the Galveston Poets' Roundtable and the Writers' League of Texas.

Irby holds a B.A. in history from the University of Texas at Austin, with previous studies at the University of Houston, Brazosport College, and Edinburgh University in Scotland. He pursued post-graduate studies at the University of Houston.

