

Sol Magazine

Summer 2008



Featured Poets

Cheryl Hicks
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Adamarie Fuller
Robert Meade

Rebecca Travis
Richard Peake
Donny Wankan
Barbara Carle

Self Preservation

like glowing onions
we live our lives in the dark
stored in last season's pantyhose
held apart
by excuses and knots
with no individual ever touching
another

with just these artificial navels
in between
don't think I haven't seen
behind your finely tempered mind
all the way down to the cellar
where you hang your ideas

all those dangling, mangled limbs
nothing more than lumps and clots
lackadaisically waiting
for some lesser vegetable
to brush up against them
making the whole onion infantry
swing into step
like muffled chimes

don't think I haven't considered
the cabbage, sworn to secrecy
and unable to tell a bulb
the battle's lost

the battle's lost
and no one's marching anywhere
except closer to decay

Flight Risk

I had the dream gun in my dream
hand last night
but the scene didn't go
as far as death

it was like falling off a building
and waking
before making the ground
my final home

and I sat up, wondering
how I could have
botched the landing

again

some nights
I almost die in my sleep
I keep the muzzle pointed
at my head

and though I'm tentatively anchored
by bed sheets and promises
of the good life

my saving grace is reality
and knowing that the end
is only a figure of speech

Jettatura

If I could watch with my eyes closed,
I would know more how you move. But I am
blinded by your sweep of arm, my good
intentions falter, and I forget
the words. As though balanced on toe
on a rickety white chair,
I posture and prance, then
dive,
knowing this
is my last possible chance
to keep
from
falling.

Behind this desperation in my eyes,
I am learning to fly.

Cheryl Hicks

Aviary

Past the pulp
toward the bitter core,
I bite into apple seeds
everyday
and think
how different
the world would be
if we were
together.

These are words
that must be
whispered,
words
as sure &
as delicate
as the skin
behind my knees.

I dream
of the way
we would sleep,
like tossed wagers
on velvet,
the placement
of every elbow
and finger
exact
in carelessness.

I lift my hair,
and think of your neck.
You cup my hip,
and the mystery
of our scent
lingers
like silence.

Still,
we are here,
two small birds
with no large wish
to fly.

In Case of Emergency Break Glass

My four years of college
rest in a snow globe
sitting on a shelf waiting to be
turned over so that the
flakes can gently fall over
Carmen Hall, John Jay, Hamilton,
Butler Library, and East Campus
I dodge the snow flakes
sit on a bench between
the Low Library Rotunda and the gym
reading *Variety* or *The Daily News*

I cross Amsterdam Avenue
to have an egg cream and pound cake
in the luncheonette near the used book store
or to V&T's for pizza and coffee
at the Hungarian pastry shop

Later I walk through Riverside Park
at the west or along
Morningside Drive to the east
At night I stare at the skyline from
the window at the end of the hall
snow falling within my dome
settling around my feet

It is a safe world a comfort zone still
after all these years
if you ever need me in an emergency
just break the glass

Spring Break Pre-MTV Generation

Spring break meant going home for a week
hoping a friend or two would have
the same week off so that we could
spend an evening or two nursing a drink
at Kelties's Bum Steer in the back room
where the walls were lined with old books and
soft rock played on WWYZ "Natural 92"
I would spend the first two days
sequestered in the lonely upper room
of the Kent Free Public Library
writing research papers
for the second half of the semester
eating lunch at the restaurant next door
There was no money for spring break vacations
before drinking too much became a sport
beach volleyball a national pastime and
baring breasts on MTV a rite of passage

Lou Orfanella

Never Once

Never once when I emerged from
the 116th Street subway station
was a troubled freshman with a
cocked trigger lying in wait behind the
black iron gates of the university
Like sniper Charles Whitman who in
1966 twelve years earlier opened fire
from the University of Texas at Austin's
27 story tower killing 15 wounding 31

Never once when I climbed the stairs
of Hamilton Hall ten years after its occupation
by student protesters did New York City police
have to remove by force anyone from
the administrative offices

Never once as I walked wrapped in
nothing but a towel from 1226 to the
showers at the end of the hall
did an explosion ring out from the
lower levels of the dorm
like the shots at Kent State,
Monday, May 4, 1970, fired at students
by the Ohio National Guard

Decades later as bodies were
carried from blood stained classrooms
at Virginia Tech and you innocently
left your room with the rising sun
and crossed the quad, shoulder bag
dangling, sandals flopping lightly on the ground
Did you look over your shoulder in
fear of what might lie ahead
Just once

Twenty

I took my son's photo today
In front of his first apartment.
He looked so happy in that boyish way.

Sunglasses on in the glare of mid-day
His shirt un-tucked, quite content!
I took my son's photo today.

He found a place on the beltway,
High on friends but low in rent.
He looked so happy in that boyish way.

He stood upon the stairway,
His life in full ascent.
I took my son's photo today.

Courage helped him through that doorway;
New plans unsteady but well-meant.
He looked so happy in that boyish way.

His adult life is underway,
With a bit of childhood devilment.
I took my son's photo today,
He looked so happy in that boyish way.

View from the Top

The ocean view from my window
beckons me to leave my work
and swim out to the deepest blue
depths; moving with the fish
in the reef, first up then down;
swirling in large groups
or darting daringly alone.
Predators hide among grains of sand
at the bottom, eyes watching for me;
fishermen try to lure me from the surface
sending nets to ensnare me.
Everywhere I look, I see danger,
persecution, connivance.
I rouse myself and ponder this silly
daydream. No problem, I tell myself.
I'm on the top floor, and the company's
doing great. We recycle – hydrocarbons.
The only thing I need to worry
about is the color of my new Mercedes.

Adamarie Fuller

Texas Drifters

*The mind ...was meant to soar
like the vulture. ~ William D. Barney*

Turkey vultures catch the hot air
drifting up from the west Texas canyons.
Swirling in broad spirals, they watch
for snakes, rabbits or other creatures
who are part of the Cap Rock buffet.
Occasionally a larger animal
sustains them
before they too succumb
and nourish the flock.

Change of Life

My theory is that responsibility
makes you gain weight,
worry adds cellulite,
gray hair and bunions.

It must be true because
the evidence is right in front of me:
the old lady staring back
from the bathroom mirror.

When I was a teenager I would
down two hamburgers at a time,
swilling Coca-Colas
throughout bikini summers.

An ex-husband, two kids,
assorted pets, jobs and homes
have worked their way through
my life, my character, my face.

It's now one-piece swimsuits for me,
with a cover-up, floppy hat, sunglasses
and the big bottle of sun screen
for those romance-novel summers ahead.

Examen

You always surprise me
Like sunset blooming
Through petals of swirling cloud,
Like a patch of peppered snow still clinging
To winter in the back corner of a green front porch.

I used to ask
What did you want of me?
Into what shape should I mold myself
To best fit the palm of your hand?
Now I know I need only be still
Letting the days branch about me
Until I grow not into one shape
But into all shapes.

I need to be still just long enough
To let your Infinity
Find its shape in me,
Clouds nestling an oval sun,
Wind caressing the snowfall's face.

I need to let go
Until all my yesterdays melt
And run together with ease,
Brimming tomorrow with your surprise
Like sunset dancing along the undersides
Of leaves.

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Robert Meade

Butterfly Dreams

She lights at midnight,
Leans a hip against his door,
Knocks, asking nothing.
Moonlight molds her, silk
As soft as a newborn's sigh.
She glows, holds her breath.
Sleeper wakes within,
Shakes a dream by his bed lamp,
Darkness crouches still.
A robe of worm's milk.
A hard man who pulls it tight.
He stands, holds the key.
The door swings open.
She breathes his name, his life. She—
His one waking dream.
They cling, wrapped in hard
Softness of the moonlamp light,
His hand on her heart.
Two hearts dancing tight—
Two tongues speaking without words—
They shatter the night.
Two robes on the ground:
Butterflies fluttering wild.
Private Pentecost.

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May Day

May came
With ooze of earth in the air
Like the musk of a hundred handshakes.
You all sat slumped over sonnets
So I unlocked *The Little Prince*
And tossed you a lifeline of prose.
You caught his steady gaze that day
And thought it odd the flier cried
To leave a boy and rose behind.
At the end, you even stayed to talk
Springing up before you flew
Away.

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Sky Speaks

it has been quiet here
a long time
but today sky speaks

Gather Close

I will not be silent
I am here to witness
to tell the stories
that need to be heard
no forgetting

if you gather close to me
no turning your head away
from suffocating greed
I stand and shout openly
tell everyone I meet

about cruelty suffered
native endurance
is a beautiful thing
in the eyes
of a grateful granddaughter

rumbles and rolls
across the heavens
one side talking

to the other
I say this
yes, and I say that

their rolling tongues
magnificent in the way
we can feel their words

within our bodies
they bring lightening
to wake up the world

command our attention
they speak of rain
carried with them

their dutiful blessing
for Mother Earth
today a gentle shower

Rebecca H. Travis

Behind the Rains

wind and the throb of thunder
drum inside the heart
they accept the body's reverence
for the natural world

behind the rains
listen for the faint suckling
like a small child
as earth slowly drinks

pine scent greets the river's edge
mingles with fresh soaked soil
the smell of spring
skirts the edges of memory

wet and warm
fragrance and moisture
settle in the heart
like an old desire

Full of Hope

seed responds
to warm earth
and a morning shower
explodes
with a mighty shove
splits open
in an instant of joy

as a child reaches
for the comfort
of its mother
the newborn plant
lifts its head
stretches toward
the searing sun

Bucket of Stones

this land holds hard memories
like a bucket of stones
they sit out in the open
as angry storms pound
their fists overhead
when the bucket fills
these memories spill over the top
they roll down the hills

across the prairies
spreading out
in all directions
they soak into the skin
let loose in the blood
these memories recall
a time of sadness
and quicken the pulse for change

Greet the Day

greet the day
with a thankful heart
for what lies ahead

in the coming hours
is precious time
to consider choices

to make amends
to share with earth
the joy of living

greet the day
with a thankful heart
knowing you are blessed

Grasshoppers for Cathy

On fields covered with Joe Pye pink
and Ironweed purple
she romps over brown-eyed Susans
where rainbows of grasshoppers
munch their herbal lunch
and monarch butterflies
lay their eggs on giant milkweeds—
a field where young boys
and self-liberated girls
chase June bugs over the hill
clasping the string tied to the insect's leg,
following the metallic green
seer that will lead them to treasures:
a meadowlark singing above a nest,
salamanders in the stream,
green and red and yellow grasshoppers
flying off the herbal sea
kids are traversing,
running with the sun
and scattering insects to the air
where kingbirds and swallows and kestrels
swoop down to dine
on the kaleidoscopic wings
of bugs, and beetles, and grasshopper fare
while the sailors running on this sea
shout their joy of the life force
amidst the rainbow grasshopper flares.

A Substitution

We are a picnic people on the run
who stand awhile upon the sandy cliffs
and stare across the ocean far away,
watching clouds form hieroglyphs
around the punctures of the sun.

At our backs tall buildings
poke their towers high and stark above
the furious honks of motor horns
which symphonize the loves
of small and frightened worldlings.

Across the water lie the golden isles
where happy savages danced and sang
about a careless sort of life
until the apostles of steel fangs
substituted cans for coconuts and smiles.

Richard Peake

Villanelle: *Memento Mori*

At funerals my father wondered why
so few familiar mourners joined him there.
Death's iron grasp cannot be denied.

As younger men departed with no cry
he spent more hours at thought and prayer.
Death's iron grasp seemed to be passing by.

Years flashed by and what had seemed awry
was now set right to whet his friends' despair.
Death's iron grasp could not be defied.

We who remain to find what Death requires
must face hot fires and hate and warfare.
Death's iron grasp is strong and does not die.
Death's iron grasp cannot be denied.

Passion and the Desert

Full throttle
came the goshawk in his hurtle
at his prey—
ten eons and ten feet away
caught sight of me,
applied wind-scuffing brakes.

He looked across man-million years
of fire and gods
(I thought in fear) with fierce disdain
before he circled free
and shied away from me
in search of rabbit prey.

When I turned back
amid the cross-like cactus
to my coffee by the fire
and my stale taunts of god,
I knew myself, a liar.

The Dead Notebook

what if the moths
or worms or rot
had eaten only the money?

left behind only
sliver fades of blade grass
paper?

what if her name was still legible
the who of it still breathing
on the journal ringless cover
black edged and splotchy?

it puffs into air when I breech it
words with it
blink and stare
as I turn them
blink again in dropping lids
of puff

dust phrases hang open
for seconds
never long enough
to build something
larger than an assumption
louder than a whispered *maybe*

Termite Trails

on the stick I poke the fire with
I look for messages from hexapodic druids
a three day mountain man
I cast futures from stars I've never seen
and think myself a mystic
deciphering coded etchings

but symbols dance
away from my evocations
the diviner's star
explodes into eaten crossroads
and the fire shortens my artifact
with each black-pointed tap
dimming the pale nibbles
to dark tracks
of consumption
which the fire concurs
with yellow, clicking tongues
is the only living prophecy

Donny Wankan

Iccarus

astronauts never die
a mannequin costume
drifting on cable
on segmented beeps
life signs, seagulls, they wave to the camera

while drifting past vision a glove floats free
a shimmering, empty limb
with light feedback
like hand-sized jewelry
gaudy utility, let go
by a groaning, slow-motion slip
of heavy, heavy fingers

not back from here but pouring
a sun echoed shape
outward to every lightless other
where silence hisses
where their body drifts later
a weightless star shroud

but for now they press
through winded birth, a foil amniosis
as a chanted song protects their entry

Invisible Boy

the child of a sister's family
alone at the potluck reunions
a snake among birds

he hid from the scorn
of buzzard aunts
who cackled side-lipped jokes
about sex and chocolate
addiction and digestion problems

his laughter surprised them
invisible boy surfacing
from alien conception

never knowing
that others must have come there
strangers to the Amazonian burbs

The Bungalow Bar

Clanging bells of trolley cars
screech of steel wheels on steel tracks
blaring horns of trucks and cars
deafening sounds of the city streets.

But a child's ear attuned to the
soft tinkling bells playing
the welcome jingle
the bungalow bar is coming.

Shiny white truck
shaped just like
a little house
dark brown shingled roof.

Local ice cream sold exclusively in
Brooklyn
Queens and
the Bronx
in the 1940's and 50's
precursor to the Good Humor Man.

Mad dash up six flights of stairs
Momma can I please buy some ice cream?
the race to catch the truck
shiny silver nickel clutched
in my small hand
the impatient wait on line

The ice cream man
dressed in white trousers and shirt
small black bow tie
white hat with
black patent leather brim
dispenser of the prize.
Heaven on a stick
the bungalow bar.

Smooth, creamy vanilla ice cream
crunchy, dark chocolate coating
the first cold delicious bite
the battle with summer heat
the struggle to devour every sliver of
wonderful dark chocolate
melted white ice cream running
down my fingers.
Sweetest of the sweet
a childhood memory.

Barbara Carle

The Viking Ship

When you were sick
you built a Viking ship
lovingly carved of white wood.
It was intricate and beautiful
like all your work.

The dragon-headed prow
faced the future.
Three hand carved shields decorated
port and starboard
You never shared their meaning.

You fashioned tiny people
out of white paper.
On long strips you wrote
thoughts and deeds
you wanted to set free.
You rolled them up
tied them with twine and
placed them in the hull.
I never read your scrolls.

You unfurled
a billowing, hand stitched sail
bearing a red cross.
You planned a Viking funeral
to sail upon Clear Lake
and set your ship afire
releasing all your worldly cares.

In the hospital, you said
Mom, don't forget to burn my Viking ship.

Dearest Scott, please forgive me
after I lost you
I could not burn your ship.
It is a part of you
I can't let go.

About the Poets

Barbara Carle is a poet and short story writer. She is the mother of four, the grandmother of six. Barbara is a member of the Poetry Society of Texas, Gulf Coast Poets, Spectrum Center Writer's Guild and Bay Area Writers League. She resides in Galveston County, Friendswood, Texas with her husband and family.

Adamarie Fuller is a native Houstonian and a CPA for a multi-national oil-supply corporation in Houston. Ada is a founding member of the Net Poetry society. She has two grown children in Austin. Her poems have appeared or are scheduled to appear in *The Weight of Addition* and *A Summers Poems* (both from Mutabilis Press), *The Poetry Revolt* (The Poetry Revolt), *Poetry at Round Top 2007* and 2008, *Austin international Poetry Festival 2008 Anthology* (Di-Verse-City) and the *Texas Poetry Calendar 2009* (Dos Gatos Press).

Cheryl Hicks has had poetry and creative nonfiction published in many journals internationally including most recently: *Crate*, *Southern Hum*, *The First Line*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Other Poetry*, *The Orphan Leaf Review*, *Word Riot*, and *Monkey Kettle*. Hicks currently teaches journalism, photography and creative writing and is also a successful visual artist. Her mixed media canvases have been shown across Texas and in New York, and her work has appeared in *Blue Print Review*, *Anti-* and *Creative Soup*.

Robert Meade is a published author of fiction and non-fiction. He received the Word Weaving Award for Excellence for his non-fiction book, *Daily Bread: Seven Days to a Healthier Soul*. His poems have appeared in national magazines like the *English Journal* and *MAGISine*, *The Journal of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association*, and also in small presses. He lives in Mohegan Lake, in Westchester County, New York, with his wife and three children.

Lou Orfanella's books include *Objects in Mirror are Closer Than They Appear*, *In a Flash: Twenty-One Short Short Stories*, *Excursions: Poetry and Prose*, *Streets of New York*, *How I Happened*, *Allurements and Lamentations*, *Permanent Records*, *Composite Sketches*, *Scenes from an Ordinary Life: Getting Naked to Explore a Writer's Process and Possibilities*, and *Summer Rising, River Flowing*. His publishing company, The Last Automat Press (www.thelastautomat.com) releases chapbooks of poetry, short fiction, and memoir.

Richard Peake was born in Norfolk, Virginia, now resides in Galveston, Texas, but still spends summers in the mountains of Virginia. He first wrote and published poetry as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia. A father and grandfather, he has been an active amateur naturalist since his teens. Places published: *Birds and Other Beasts*, *Cumberland*, *Georgia Review*, *Houston Audubon Soc. Newsletter*, *Impetus*, *Jimsonweed*, *Snowy Egret*, *University of Virginia Magazine*, *Wings Across... and Poems for Terence* (Vision Books).

Rebecca Hatcher Travis, a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, often writes about nature and her native heritage. Her first poetry collection, *Picked Apart the Bones*, is scheduled for publication in 2008. It was winner of the 2006 First Book Award for Poetry competition by Native Writers' Circle of the Americas. Among others, her works appear in *Byrds Mill Spring's Story and Town of Franks Revisited*, *Texas Poetry Calendar 2008*, and the *Chickasaw Times*. Her book, *Picked Apart the Bones*, will soon be released. She lives in Friendswood, Texas.

Donny Wankan lives in the Houston area with his wife and daughter and teaches and studies English Literature. Born in the piney woods of East Texas and raised in Dallas, he says he is one half crude hick and one half phony intellectual. Donny is a member of the Gulf Coast Poets, and their Anthology Chair.

Prior Publication Credits

Adamarie Fuller

Change of Life (*Texas Poetry Calendar 2009*, Dos Gatos Press)

Cheryl Hicks

Aviary (*Washington Literary Review*)

Flight Risk (*Monkey Kettle*, UK)

Jettatura (*Ginosko Literary Journal*)

Self Preservation (*Poems-for-All*)

Robert Meade

Butterfly Dreams (*Malini*, 1985)

May Day (*The English Journal*, 1986)

Lou Orfanella

In Case of Emergency Break Glass (*Objects in Mirror are Closer Than They Appear*, Fine Tooth Press, 2008)

Never Once (*Objects in Mirror are Closer Than They Appear*, Fine Tooth Press, 2008)

Spring Break Pre-MTV Generation (*Objects in Mirror are Closer Than They Appear*, Fine Tooth Press, 2008)

Richard Peake

Grasshoppers for Cathy (Jimsonweed, *UVA Wise*, 2008)

Passion and the Desert (*The Georgia Review*, 1965)

A Substitution (*Impetus*, Stetson University, 1960)

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