

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Cultural Weekly Poetry Contest Winners, Part 2

Cultural Daily · Wednesday, November 20th, 2013

The first ever Cultural Weekly Open Submissions Period was a huge success. We received over three hundred and fifty poems from one hundred and twenty poets, poets from Malaysia, Ireland, Europe, Africa and Japan. Poets from all over the US and Canada. They sent haiku, free verse, elegies, political poems; one or two poets defiantly sent poems that rhymed.

All poems were read “blind,” i.e., all identifying information about the poet was stripped from the entries before they were read. All poems were read in their entirety.

In the end, we choose ten poetry contest finalists, what we considered to be the best of the best.

[Last week](#) we published five of them: the poem we liked best, and the first four of nine finalists, in no particular order. Today we are publishing the remaining five poems .

The first place poet and nine finalists are:

Fatimah Zainal (first place, pictured above)

Lisa Segal

John Grochalski

Yuri Kageyama

Diana Darby

Doireann Ni Ghriofa

Shauna Osborn

Stewart Mintzer

Peter Neil Carroll

Anita Pulier

I hope you enjoy reading these poems as much as I did. Comments welcome.

*Alexis Rhone Fancher*

*Poetry Editor*

*Cultural Weekly*

## ***Valise of Memories by Doireann Ni Ghriofa***

*In memory of Margaret Maher, housemaid & confidante of Emily Dickinson*

My mistress filled my valise with her vowels —

the battered trunk that journeyed with me

from the shadow of Slievenamon.

Now she is dead.

She made me promise to feed them to flames.

I cannot yet bring myself to do the deed.

I try to dismiss their wild whispers

but they bang their fists against the walls  
 and stamp their syllables.  
 They long to live in the mouths and minds of strangers.  
 When I should be scrubbing, cooking, sweeping, cleaning,  
 I am tormented by the quarrel between the promise  
 to my mistress and the bequest she left behind.  
 The soft grey wool of my mind is marked by dropped stitches.  
 All day, I mumble and fumble, spill soup on my apron,  
 catch my fingers in the mangle.  
 Though I keep my chest clasped shut,  
 I cannot quieten their pleading.  
 Their stifled screams shake me from sleep.  
 I stumble to the chest, raise the lid, scratch a match.  
 The flame stares at her scribbled papers.  
 Pinching the spark between finger and thumb,  
 I quench it and lift the papers from darkness, one by one.



Doireann Ní Ghríofa

*Doireann Ní Ghríofa's poems have appeared in literary journals in Ireland and internationally. The Arts Council has twice awarded her literature bursaries. Her Irish language collections *Résheoid* and *Dúlairs* are both published by Coiscéim. Her pamphlet *Ouroboros* was longlisted for The Venture Award (UK). She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.*

## ***Mangoes in Early Fall* by Shauna Osborn**

There's no civilized way to eat some fruits—  
 just savage sucking & ripping of flesh,  
 the large white seed in the center  
 waiting to be exposed. Bite into it  
 like an apple or a peach—such sweetness  
 drips down the throat, blonde fibers  
 much like corn silk & just as uneatable.  
 This exotic tropical fruit—only seen in  
 romantic comedies located in some  
 exotic place—never grown amongst  
 the pear trees & grape vines. & when  
 the large white seed with yellow orange  
 troll hair is put on the plate with the  
 toughened shaved skin (read rind)  
 that couldn't be chewed, the poem is done  
 gone, left in the space of time that can only  
 be broken with teeth marks through inviting  
 red/green flesh



Shauna Osborn

*Shauna Osborn is a Comanche/German mestiza who works as an instructor, wordsmith, and*

*community organizer in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Recently, she received a National Poetry Award from the New York Public Library and the Native Writer Award from Taos Summer Writers' Conference.*

## **Happy Endings by Stewart Mintzer**

All month long  
 I think I'm a bad kisser  
 cause I use too much teeth  
 cause sometimes I urgently want to know  
 the beloved or whoever it is  
 morphing by my lips  
 but suddenly by some grace I can't figure out  
 I'm Love again  
 and that story of how I probably need  
 ten thousand workshops to start to fix me  
 leaves to go whisper in a far off land.  
 I want endings like that  
 where the beast is beauty  
 where the old wizard stumbles  
 on his scraggly beard  
 right before he becomes a bridge  
 a fire in the dark.  
 I can't shake the notion that I am blessed.  
 Make me a diviner of the veins up my ankle.  
 Are they the tree of life? The burning bush?  
 The tributaries of a wellspring reaching for the dusty towns?  
 If I had known how sweet this music was  
 I'd have joined the band  
 practiced smooth transitions  
 from C to G  
 to blue to wet.  
 And it's rainy out and  
 the crumbling white tool shed  
 still waits for visitors  
 welcomes rich loam sweaty hands blisters  
 rusty shovels.  
 It doesn't care about sentences that rhyme  
 or the proper way to kiss.  
 It wants the story where all of us move closer to the ground  
 and still love the sky  
 and how you could be a grizzled hiker  
 in a black cut-off shirt  
 or a refrigerated princess  
 waiting by the coconut milk and the parsnips  
 for some loving hands  
 to take you to the table.



Stewart Mintzer

*Stewart Mintzer lives in Los Angeles and is moving north at glacial speed. His poems have appeared in various publications including ONTHEBUS, Solo Novo, The Pedestal Magazine, Portland Review, Rattle. He has worked as a lawyer in the public defenders office and is presently at work on the 'Permission Slip Project.'*

## ***The Woman Next Door by Peter Neil Carroll***

We speak the same language, my trees  
and me. More fluently  
than I talk to the woman next door.  
Scrub oak, cherry plum, lemons, dwarf  
pine, olives, willow, redwood—whatever  
seeds the birds drop I adopt.  
Now she's added a porch  
that gives her height, a perch  
to watch from. So I walk in my backyard half-  
naked, watering pots of cactus, rosemary, dill.  
We know each other, living close  
for forty years and smile  
when our cars pass on the hill.  
In summer, windows open, I notice  
a shared taste in the tunes we play.  
We're lazy about pruning ivy that overgrows.  
But she keeps a cruel eye on my redwood.  
Its brother and sister stood tall on her side  
until she turned the grove  
into firewood. More sunlight, she crows.  
Next she'll be saying, more clothes.



Peter Neil Carroll

*Peter Neil Carroll is the author of a new collection, A Child Turns Back to Wave: Poetry of Lost Places (Hollywood: Press Americana, 2012) which won the Prize Americana. A previous volume is Riverborne: A Mississippi Requiem (2008). He lives in northern California with the writer/photographer Jeannette Ferrary.*

## ***House Poet Wanted by Anita Pulier***

Experienced, articulate,  
references required.  
Job requires weaving  
the strands of household matter  
and daily routines into the examined life.  
Must explain the dagger through the heart,  
the nail piercing the skull,  
memories triggered by the scent  
of Mama's over salted soup.  
Applicant must define the life worth living,  
identify unknown ancestors stuck together

in the box of sepia photos,  
be plain spoken, persistent,  
willing to be misunderstood,  
interpreted to death.



Anita Pulier

*Anita S. Pulier practiced law in NY and NJ. For several years she served as US representative to the UN for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She is a director of the Jane Adams Peace Association. Her chapbooks *Perfect Diet* and *The Lovely Mundane* were published by Finishing Line Press.*

*Top image: [Chalk poem detail](#), suburban Heathridge backyard, Western Australia. Photo by elliot k, used with permission under a Creative Commons license.*

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