

[Alice Major: Two Poems](#) [1]

March 28, 2016 [Math Poetry](#) [2]

Euclid's Iron Hand

My iron cannot cope
with non-Euclidean geometry.
Antique and irritable, it insists
on plane surfaces and the fifth postulate,
hissing, *Lie down flat, goddamit.*

It approves of tablecloths.
And sheets—at least the kind
without fitted corners.
It glides across these simple surfaces,
an unencumbered pedagogue,
master of its subject matter,

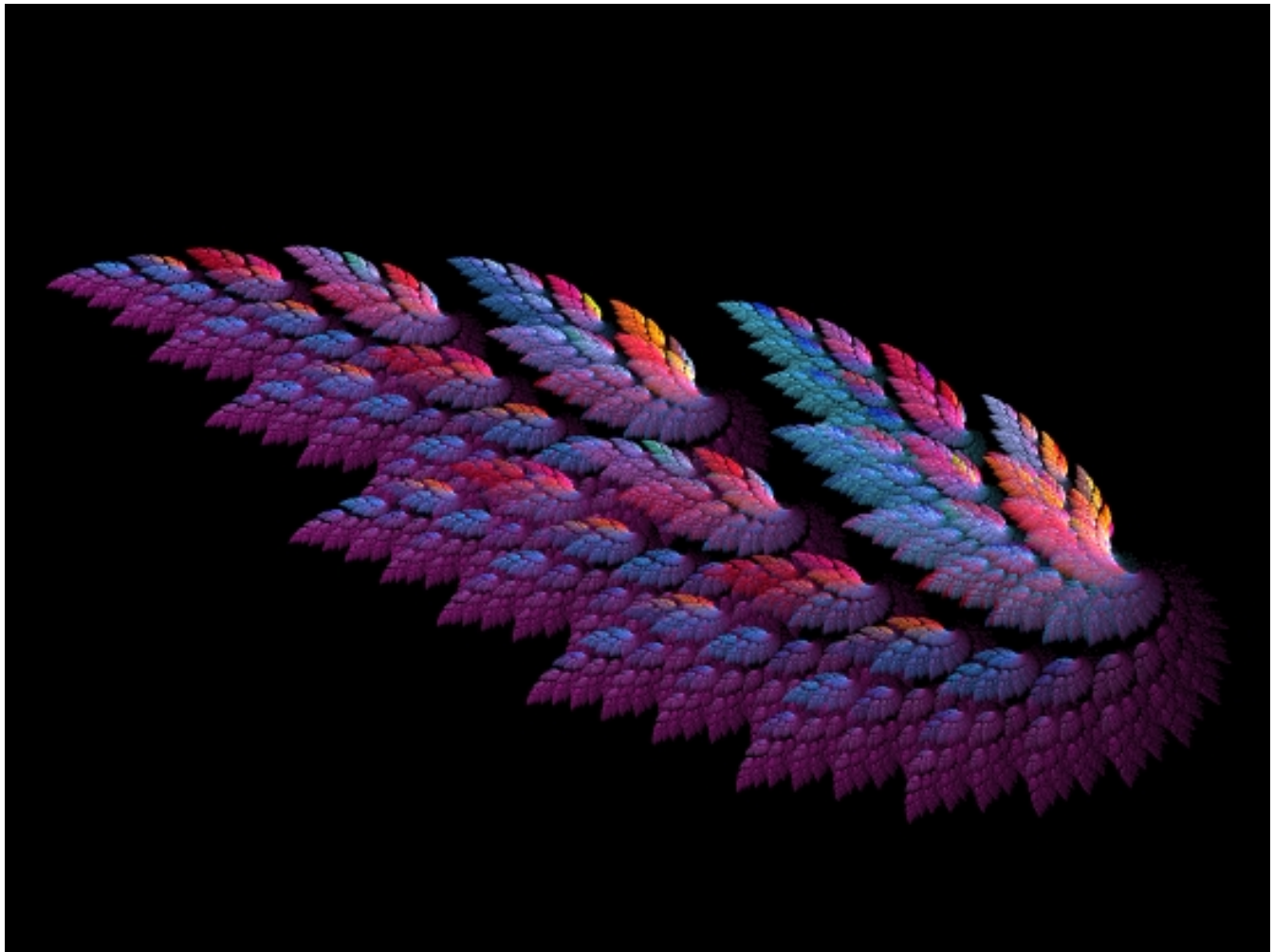
but turns stubborn in the face
of new topologies like tubes
or toruses. It sears the surfaces
of sleeves together and heatedly denies
the curvature of armholes.

Bird Singularities

Bird mathematicians
struggle to calculate
those invisible walls
where the universe stops.

Space and time do loop-de-loops,
they trill sagaciously.
But there are singularities
where four dimensions of flight
intersect, contract to two,
and our equations are abruptly
banned from passing.

Passerines without classrooms
in which to acquire mathematics
become more practically aware.
These street-smart ones learn to shun
vertical planes that glimmer
with the lure of logic but
are based on false assumptions—
that air continues everywhere.



Art Information

- ["Angel Wing Fractal"](#) [3] © Tara Roys; used by permission.



Alice Major has published ten collections of poetry, two novels for young adults, and an award-winning collection of essays about poetry and science.

She grew up in Dumbarton, Scotland—a small town on the banks of the Clyde, not far from Glasgow. Her family came to Canada when she was eight, and she grew up in Toronto before coming west to work as a reporter on the *Williams Lake Tribune* in British Columbia. [4]She was the first poet laureate for the City of Edmonton, Alberta, from 2005–2007; founded the Edmonton Poetry Festival; and has led many other Canadian arts organizations.

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For more information, see [Alice Major's website](#). [4]

Alice will read at TW's panel ["Wild Equations: A Math Poetry Reading"](#) [5] for the AWP 2016 conference in Los Angeles.

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Links:

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[3] <http://tararoys.com/intro-to-fractals-making-an-angels-wing>

[4] <http://www.alicemajor.com/>

[5] https://www.awpwriter.org/awp_conference/event_detail/5527