

## [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,

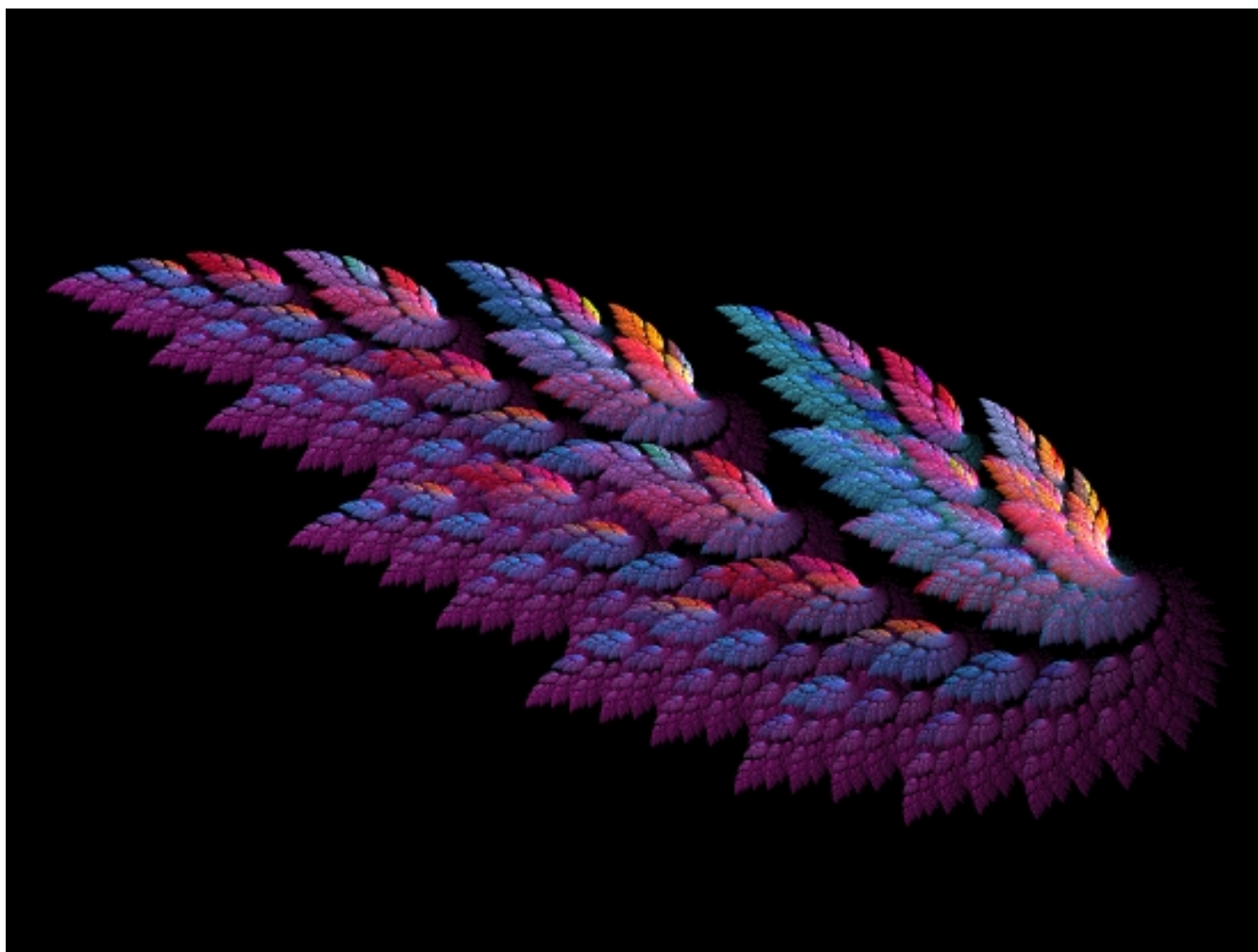
but turns stubborn in the face  
of new topologies like tubes  
or toruses. It sears the surfaces  
of sleeves together and heatedly denies  
the curvature of armholes.

### 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.



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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.

## Alice Major: Two Poems

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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.

**Source URL:** <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/alice-major-two-poems>

### Links:

[1] <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/alice-major-two-poems>

[2] <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/talkingwriting-categories/spotlight-math-poetry>

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