



# *English Studies in Latin America*

## **Selected poems**

**Author:** Ann Fisher Wirth

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## Selected Poems

Ann Fisher Wirth<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Fisher-Wirth's fourth book of poems is *Dream Cabinet* (Wings Press 2012). Her other books of poems are *Carta Marina*, *Blue Window*, and *Five Terraces*. With Laura-Gray Street, she coedited the groundbreaking *Ecopoetry Anthology* (Trinity UP 2013, 2014). She has been awarded residencies at The Mesa Refuge; Djerassi Resident Artists Program; Hedgebrook; and CAMAC/Centre d'Art, Marnay, France. Her current project is a collaborative poetry/photography manuscript called *Mississippi* with the acclaimed photographer Maude Schuyler Clay, which Wings Press will publish in 2017. Photographs and letterpress poems from this project are presently on exhibit throughout Mississippi. Ann is a Fellow 2015-2018 of the Black Earth Institute, the recipient of two senior Fulbrights (Switzerland, Sweden), and past president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. She teaches and directs the Environmental Studies program at the University of Mississippi, and she teaches yoga at Southern Star in Oxford.

Report from the Neighborhood

Four Carolina wren eggs, big  
as the tip of my thumb,  
each with a specked dusting

that looks like a tonsure of dirt  
or cocoa, abandoned in the nest  
outside my kitchen. Delilah,

the pretty little calico next door—  
where students party, playing Frisbee  
or lounging around the porch keg

in baggy tees and gym shorts—  
Delilah slinks through our yard,  
flattening her belly to the grass

and her ears to her head. She wants  
the robins and cardinals so bad  
and maybe she got the mama

but mostly the birds just  
flitter up into the pecan trees  
or privet hedges and keep warbling.

I have laid the four never-to-be-born  
delicate eggs carefully in a tiny  
Chinese bowl, white as snow inside,

patterned outside with turquoise  
phoenixes and golden lotuses,  
and I stroke them with one fingertip.

It's ninety-six degrees today.  
Hydrangea leaves hang limp.  
A summer thunderstorm's rising.

Broccoli

When she said the Korean orphans  
would love to have my broccoli, I suggested  
we send it to them next time we mailed

a Christmas box to daddy—slippers, cheese,  
mints, pictures of me and my little sister,  
boxed tight with twine and sealing wax to his

APO in Seoul. I hoped those children  
with bowl-cut bangs and magenta sweaters  
would enjoy what to me were smelly trees—

but got sent to bed for my “sass,” couldn’t play  
Kick the Can in the twilight street till bedtime  
for a week. My broccoli joined other dishes

in the white, round-topped, Westinghouse fridge:  
leftover bullet peas, half a tuna sandwich,  
stewed tomatoes, congealed drippings our mother

never used for gravy but hung on to  
nonetheless as “the good essence of the meat.”  
When she was a child, she had to clean her plate

because of the starving Armenians;  
when my kids were little, I refused to tell them  
they had to eat for Ethiopia. Always

abundance, always hunger—just last week,  
I saw a one-armed man dumpster diving  
in Thessaloniki, and feral cats

lined up around our table at the seaside  
restaurant, waiting patiently, silently,  
for bits of falafel or squid. My mother

lived through the Depression, couldn’t stop  
saving leftovers even though, in the prosperous  
Pennsylvania 50’s, she never used them.

And I? I serve leftover pasta  
five nights in a row, make crazy combinations  
from dabs of rice, that lone half-breast

of chicken, the final withered carrot,  
three mushrooms, scrambled eggs. I want to be

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better than I am—not to add so much

to the world's waste. And I want, at last, to be  
buried un-embalmed, un-leftover, in Mississippi  
forest land beneath an oak or dogwood tree.

From Val Corsaglia, Italian Piemonte  
(First published in *Prairie Schooner*, 2010)

We walked away from the village of Corsaglia along a trail that led through lush,

*Species loss*

nearly impenetrable oak, hazelnut, and chestnut woods, past ancient stone houses

*ocean acidification*

and shepherds' huts, beside a rushing stream. When we began to walk it was softly

*ocean "dead zones"*

raining. The rain soon stopped, but the mist and cool soft air remained. Everywhere

*global freshwater crisis*

wildflowers—buttercups, daisies, scabiosa with its purple tufts, Johnny jump-ups,

*deforestation*

button ferns, wild geraniums, wild strawberries. Once, when the river

*consequent soil erosion*

curved away, a meadow opened up to our left, and it was so richly flowering

*colony collapse disorder*

that I could only think of the millefleurs foregrounds of medieval paintings,

*fertilizers and herbicides, chemically toxic soil*

the thousand small flowers springing up around the Christ child

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Mouna

(First published in *Heron Tree* 2016)

*Sanskrit: silence*

Why do you think you must have something to say?

The clouds do not speak. The water spreads  
nearly to infinity

with its ragged hem of dark trees, and those grasses  
there in the corner of your vision, the wind

moves them or does not move them,  
they stretch forward into the light.

Lake, trees, sky—  
look, everything is breathing.

You could put your fingers through these clouds.  
Piled high above the lake, they're wet air, silence.