

The Poet Ai – 1947-2010



The poet Ai died unexpectedly from an illness on March 20, 2010.

Ai was born October 21, 1947 in Albany, Texas and lived much of her early life in Arizona. She received a B.A. from the University of Arizona in Oriental Studies in 1969 and an M.F.A. from the University of California, Irvine in 1971. Ai was a major voice in contemporary poetry, working extensively in the dramatic monologue. She published her first book *Cruelty* in 1973, and six later collections, *Killing Floor* (1979), *Sin* (1986), *Fate* (1991), *Greed* (1993), *Vice* (1999), and *Dread* (2004).

Her career spanned decades of awards for her poetry, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1975, the Lamont Poetry Award from the Academy of American Poets for *Killing Floor*, and National Endowment for the Arts Awards in 1978 and 1985. She received the American Book Award for *Sin* in 1987 and the National Book Award for *Vice* in 1999. In 2002-2003 she held the Mitte Chair in Creative Writing at Southwest Texas State University, and in December 2009, she was recognized with a United States Artists Ford Fellowship in literature.

From 1999 until her death, she was a professor in the Creative Writing Program at Oklahoma State University. A volume of new poems, *No Surrender*, is scheduled to be published by W.W. Norton in September of this year.

The poet Ai is survived by her half-sister, Rosslynn O'Carroll, and by many colleagues, students, and friends.

The family has arranged a viewing for students, friends, and colleagues at the Palmer Marler Funeral Home in Stillwater from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. on Wednesday, March 24.

The Department of English plans to establish a creative writing scholarship in Ai's memory. Contributions may be sent to: Ai Scholarship, Department of English, 205 Morrill Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078. Checks should be made out to "**OSU Foundation**," and the memo line should read "**Ai Memorial Scholarship Fund in English**."