

**April 2007**

*"Relax / I tell them / you're inside / poetry now"* —Julia Connor

april 2nd  
**poetic justice**  
a benefit for  
**frank andrick**

the poet  
is a thief  
of fire

*Poem by Frank Andrick*

To  
be a poet  
entails more than  
the writing of poems.  
It demands a commitment  
to live and die with great style  
and an even greater sadness.  
To wake up each morning  
with the fever raging,  
and to know that it can never  
be extinguished except by  
death,  
and yet to be convinced that this suffering,  
this sensitivity carries its own unique  
reward ...  
I want to be  
the Hierophant  
of an unapprehended  
Inspiration



**readings by**

James Rollins  
B.L. Kennedy  
Tim Kahl  
Star Vaughn  
Mario Ellis Hill  
Terryl Wheat  
Mary Zeppa  
and more!

**music by**

J. Greenberg  
Joel Ginsberg

HQ for the Arts  
1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
Doors open at 6

A Sac-Franciscan experimental mythologist whose work spans poetry, prose, and tale telling. **FRANK ANDRICK** is the producer and host of the **POMO LITERATI** a two hour spoken word program broadcast on KUSF. He co-hosts **POETRY UNPLUGGED @ LUNA'S** an open mic/featured reading series. Interpolating sound, visual, and performing arts is life for frank. He believes "there is more space inside of us than we'll ever find outside of us." He is inspired by fire, images, dreams, tarot cards, the Knights Templar, the Surreal, the Symbol, the eternal & the unknown.

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Submissions of poems, artwork, reviews, and other work of interest to the Sacramento poetry community are welcome. Work must be accompanied by a SASE for return. Note that work submitted to SPC's publications may appear on SPC's website as well: [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

Please submit to 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento CA 95814, or via email to: [poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto:poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

*Poetry Now* is distributed in area bookshops, Sacramento County libraries, and by mail to SPC member-subscribers. If you are interested in receiving *Poetry Now*, or want multiple copies to share with others, please contact us at the above address.

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**Calendar Editor:** Allison Himelright



**The Poet Tree, Inc.**, also known as **The Sacramento Poetry Center**, is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets—including publications, workshops, and a reading series. SPC is entirely run by a volunteer board of directors.

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## president's message

April is Poetry Month, from what I've heard over the years. Whether its showers be sweet (Chaucer) or cruel (Eliot), the month brings poetry out all over Sacramento. There's a new venue in Elk Grove that starts up this month — at Borders Books on Laguna Boulevard. Emmanuel Sigauke will be coordinating and hosting the event, and he has lined up a fine group of readers (including **Indigo Moor**, **Lisa Dominguez Abraham** and **Lawana Cager**) for April 26. Check it out, and support this new location for readings in that growing city.

SPC is really in need of financial support right now. Our grants are shrinking faster than Earth's glaciers. In order for us to keep producing *Poetry Now*, maintain the website, and hold the weekly readings, we can't survive on volunteers alone. Please consider making a donation to SPC now — send your tax-deductible contributions to SPC/1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street/Sacramento 95814. Thanks!

We have another full schedule for April Mondays at HQ. *Poetic Justice* — a benefit for **frank andrick** — will be on April 2. Come at 6 for music, conversation and a little wine. Stick around for the reading at 7:30 — featuring acclaimed Sacramento novelist **James Rollins**, plus a line-up of local poets proud to call themselves “friends-of-frank.” **Star Vaughn**, **BL Kennedy**, **Mario Ellis Hill** and others, including frank himself, will read as part of the festivities. \$10 donation at the door — give more if you can — there are a lot of good reasons to help out this staunch supporter of the local literary scene!

On April 9 the winners of the 2006 SPC Contest will read their winning poems — at least a half-dozen plan to attend, including the top two selected: **Cathleen Williams** and **Marie Reynolds**. Other readers expected include **Tom Goff**, **Megan Willis** and **Frances Kakugawa**. Find out why these poets' pieces were selected by Julia Connor out of *over 350 entries*. April 16 gives the young writers of Sacramento a chance to strut *their* stuff, as we host the High School Poetry Awards (7:30 at HQ). We'll squeeze the **SPC Writer's Conference** in on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> (reception and reading), and Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> (workshops from 9 to 4). See front page for details. April 23 will be **Peter Grandbois'** first SPC reading, with Tim Kahl hosting, and on April 30 we begin a series of readings featuring local college writers. Jeff Knorr's poetry class heads up from Sac City to read on April 30, David Merson's class from ARC will be here on May 7, and Cheryl Smith's CSUS poetry class will hold forth on May 14<sup>th</sup>. I'll be hosting all three college groups — I always enjoy watching readers young or old try out their pieces in an “urban” setting for the first time. Join me, and cheer them on!

I would also like to thank Ian Price and his mom for their help in mailing *Poetry Now*.

—Bob

# SPC **Writers' Conference 2007**

All events take place at 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento

## April 20

**FRIDAY NIGHT READING  
AND RECEPTION 7-9PM**

*Free!*

Hors d'oeuvres and  
drinks 7 - 7:30 pm

Reading 7:30 – 9:00pm

**Heather Hutcheson**  
**Andy Jones**  
**Danny Romero**  
**Brad Henderson**

### **Registration fee**

\$25 for SPC members  
\$35 for non-members  
(combined registration fee and  
annual membership is \$50)

Friday night reading is free—  
donations requested.

## April 21

**SATURDAY WORKSHOPS 9AM TO 4PM**

8:30 – 9:00 Coffee and muffins

9:00 – 9:45 Panel discussion

**Andy Jones, Camille Norton,  
Gail Entrekin, Danny Romero**

10:00 – 11:45 Small workshop sessions

- **Andy Jones & Brad Henderson**
- **Gail Entrekin** – “The Taste of Poetry”
- **Camille Norton**
- **Heather Hutcheson** – “Where Poems Start”
- **Tim Kahl** – “The Speaking Voice as Poetic Tool”

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch break

1:00 – 1:20 Group performance

**!X – Sac City Ethnic Theatre Workshop**

1:30 – 2:45 Afternoon workshop sessions

- **Danny Romero** – Writing Memoir
- **Angela Dee Alforque** – Performing Spoken Word

3:00 – 4:00 Participants group reading and celebration.

### **Mail payment to:**

SPC Writers' Conference  
1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **Make check payable to:**

SPC

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

phone \_\_\_\_\_

## February Letter

by Sharon Usber

Here sings of spring are everywhere:  
Trees blossoming pink and white,  
Days warm enough for shirtsleeves,  
And clear windless skies at night.

Now spice-sweet the daphne blooms  
A winter plant, it hints of spring,  
My favored season, season of hope  
That you learn wisdom is a growing thing.

Although it's winter where you are  
And winter there makes cold an art,  
I wish for you the end of storms,  
That spring comes soon, with hope, a start.

## Into Wilderness

by Sharon Usber

You are sixteen.  
Thin, pale, defiant.  
You have blackened your eyes with kohl  
Now your face is dark with tears  
And you hold on to me  
As you last did a long decade ago.

No suitcase, no coat  
You carry only what you wear  
Also your impotent anger, fear and shame  
While with low soft words they escort you away  
from mother, father, home  
And into exile.

Perhaps you turn back to see me  
Bent and weeping in the cold bright air.  
Your father, his face a frozen tract,  
Holds me against his jacket tightly  
To comfort me and quiet me in that still place.  
Perhaps you see us slowly walking there,  
Shoulders touching like two leaning columns  
Trying to support a stunning grief  
As a stranger drives you away down a dirt road  
glinting silver with the brief desert snow.

## Life

by David W. L. Taffett

Now you are here, then you are not,  
When is this chaos going to stop?  
And where am I from, where do I belong?  
Will I find out my future, was a mistake all along?  
I'm not sure, sometimes I don't know a thing,  
I just live out each day, and see what it brings.  
Hope for the best, expect the worst,  
Take care of my loved ones, while keeping my mind diverse.  
And as each day goes on, sometimes it gets a little harder,  
But as I search for my destiny,  
I know it's not that much farther.

## Crushed

by Carol Louise Moon

If an oblivious rhino sat on me  
at the luncheon booth  
smooshing me into the paisley  
leather upholstery  
I would certainly have felt less  
abruptly trampled by a  
pensive and deliberate elephant  
had he left me a tip.



## The Book Collector

*Books for readers & collectors since 1995*  
1008 24th Street ↻ Midtown Sacramento  
Between J & K Streets ↻ (916)442-9295  
Monday to Saturday 10 to 6 ↻ Sunday 11 to 4

*Featuring a large selection of local poetry & small press*

# The True Life Story of Jesus “Boom Boom” Bernal

by Peter Grandbois

On a nail on the side of your bedroom door hangs a pair of old boxing gloves, the yellow flowers on the cuffs frayed and worn like the pock marked face of the woman from Juarez who sewed them on before the quarters of the world junior championships in Mexico City.

You took care of the gloves and they took care of you, knocking the clouds out of your head, the spider webs from behind your knees, the corners of your elbows. They were there for you when Eddie “The Cat” Rodriguez took a late swing at the end of the fifth. You didn’t see it coming, but your gloves did, the left deflecting the blow while the right gave “The Cat” the same he was looking to give. Your father taught you to rub body lotion over the surface of the leather. But from that day on you didn’t use the cheap stuff. You taught your boys, Oscar and Manuel, to do the same. *To care for them is to respect the gloves and yourself*, that’s what your father had said.

And each day when you woke, you saw your boys standing together in the garage, spreading the lotion sparingly so that the gloves didn’t get greasy. You shouted to them that they were doing a fine job, they were doing it right. You don’t want your glove sliding off your opponent’s nose. And each day you reached out to them, but they were gone, as if they never existed.

Neither Oscar nor Manuel became a fighter, at least you don’t think so.

When Gilberto “El Gallo” Gomez issued a public challenge, you sprayed your hands with a mixture of water and alcohol before tying the gloves on. And they responded with a left jab to the ribs and a right uppercut to “El Gallo’s” chin that knocked him to the canvas for the count before he ever had a chance to lay one on you. The words of your coach echoing in your ears, a refrain that was more than once taken up by the entire crowd: *Stick and move, Boom Boom. Stick*

*and Move.* The crowd pounding their feet on the stands with each cry of *Boom, Boom.*

“I just wish you’d stick more than you’d move,” your wife would say. She came at you the same way “El Gallo” came, all talk. “Seems like you’re here three days and then those flowers need watering again.” That’s why you never leave your gloves at the gym any more. You always thought clearer with them on. How were you to stop your hand with those dark clouds in your head?

It was after that you began sticking cotton socks full of cedar chips in your gloves. It wasn’t that you minded the smell of sweat, and there was no one else in the house to mind anymore either. It all came down to respect, that’s what you told yourself, something Salvador “The Snake” Sanchez would never understand. They called him “The Snake” because he’d slither his left arm around your neck, pull you in close, while he hammered away at your kidneys with his right. You bought your gloves a blow dryer after that. Only the cool setting.

So you sit in your apartment, dousing your hands with baby powder, waiting for your next shot. And the powder billows and falls upon the faces of your wife and boys. You wipe at the air, but the gloves are clumsy for such a job and knock the white dust about, scattering it until clouds form that drift away, settling over the only other two pieces of furniture in the room, the kitchen table and your queen size bed. You rub at your eyes with your wrists, hoping to take away the sting of powder, and, when you open them again, the pock marked face of the woman from Juarez stares back at you. She opens her toothless mouth, and you expect to hear her asking what you want on the cuffs, but the voice that you hear is that of your father mixed in with the chanting roar of the crowd: “You’ve got to take care of them. *Stick and move.* It’s a matter of respect. *Stick and move, Boom Boom!*”

**PETER GRANDBOIS** holds an MFA in fiction from Bennington College and a PhD in creative writing and literature from the University of Denver. He is the author of *The Gravedigger* (Chronicle 2006), which was selected for both the Barnes and Noble “Discover Great New Writers” award as well as the Border’s “Original Voices” award. In addition, his short fiction was recently cited with an honorable mention for the 2007 Pushcart Prize. His translation into English of *San Juan: Ciudad Soñada* by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá is forthcoming from the University of Wisconsin Press in 2007. He is currently a professor of creative writing and contemporary literature at CSU Sacramento.

**PETER GRANDBOIS will be reading at SPC/ Headquarters for the Arts on April 23<sup>rd</sup>**

APRIL 2007

edited by Allison Himelright

**1 Sunday**

*PoemSpirits* featuring guest reader **Tim Bellows**, Sierra College professor. Co-host JoAnn Anglin will also offer a brief presentation on renowned poet Jane Hirshfield. Free. Open mic, light refreshments provided. Bring a favorite poem to share, yours or another's. UUSS, 2425 Sierra Blvd. www.uuss.org. Info: Tom Goff or Nora Staklis: 481-3312, or JoAnn Anglin: 451-1372.

**2 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* hosts "Poetic Justice," a fundraiser for **frank andrick**. HQ for the Arts. 1719 25th St. Bob Stanley hosts. \$10 at the door. Raffle, poetry, reception, and music at 6 pm; reading starts at 7:30 pm.

**3 Tuesday**

*SPC Poetry Workshop*, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228

**5 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* features Sacramento Poet Laureate, **Julia Connor** at Luna's Café. 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free. Festivities begin at 8pm and there will be an open mic as well. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill.

**7 Saturday**

All are invited to *Escritores del Nuevo Sol's* writing group workshop and potluck. 11am. at La Raza Galeria Posada. Bring up to 3 pages of your work to read if you wish. 1024 22nd Street, Sacramento. For info call Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net

**9 Monday**

SPC Board of Directors meets at HQ for the Arts; 1719 25th Street. 5:45-7:00pm.

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents 2007 Poetry Contest winners. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Bob Stanley and Indigo Moor host. Readings by **Cathleen Williams, Marie Reynolds, Frances Kakugawa, Tom Goff**, and more.

**10 Tuesday**

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228

*Bistro 33 Poetry Series*. 8:30 pm Open Mic after. Bistro 33 in Historic Davis City Hall, 226 "F" Street, 3rd and "F" Streets in Davis.

**11 Wednesday**

*Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour*, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at www.kdvs.org.

*Rattlesnake Press* will celebrate its third birthday by presenting **D.R. Wagner** at The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., Sacramento. 7:30-9 PM to celebrate the release of his new chapbook of poetry and art, *Where the Stars are Kept*. Also released that night will be a littlesnake broadside and interview from **Ann Menebroker**, to launch the new Rattlesnake Interview Series. Refreshments and a read-around will follow; bring your own poems or somebody else's. More info: kathykieth@hotmail.com

**12 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by Geoffrey Neill. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**15 Sunday**

*Third Sunday Writing Group* Free creative writing workshop. 10th & U. Sacramento. Contact Nancy Walker oalalaparee03@yahoo.com

**16 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents 2007 High School Contest winners. Hear the next generation of Sacramento Poets! 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Rebecca Morrison hosts.

**17 Tuesday**

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228

**19 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* features poet **B.L. Kennedy**. He melds poetry and picture poems that bring painting, illustration, and wordplay into a visual context, and is also a reviewer and columnist of poetry and prose. Begins at 8 pm and there will be an open mic as well. 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free. Hosted by frank andrick.

**21 Saturday**

*Underground Poetry Series*. Open mic. 7-9pm, \$3.00. Underground Books, 2814 35th Street (35th and Broadway). Hosted by Terry Moore. www.terrymoore.info

**23 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents **Peter Grandbois**. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Tim Kahl hosts.

**24 Tuesday**

*SPC Poetry Workshop*, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228

*Bistro 33 Poetry Series*. 8:30 pm Open Mic after. Bistro 33; Historic Davis City Hall, 226 "F" St, 3rd & "F" Streets. Davis.

**25 Wednesday**

*Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour*, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at www.kdvs.org.

**26 Thursday**

*Borders* in Laguna presents An Evening of Poetry to celebrate Poetry History Month. This is a joint event sponsored by the CRC English Department and Borders Books. Featured poets: **Indigo Moor, Lawana Cager, Lisa Abraham**, and **Emmanuel Sigauke**. 7:00 pm. Borders Books. 7215 Laguna Boulevard, Elk Grove.

*Poetry Unplugged* features poets **D.R. Wagner** and **Neeli Cherkovski** — 2 famous and accomplished poets, publishers, educators, and mentors. 8pm; includes an open mic. Hosted by B.L. Kennedy. 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**28 Saturday**

*Sai Mimeo & The Process Rebels without Applause Tour of Words 2007* **John Dorsey, S.A. Griffin, Bill Roberts, David Smith, Scott Wannberg**. 8pm. The Book Collector. 1008 24th St. www.poems-for-all.com

*"The Show" Poetry Series*. 9 pm at Wo'se Community Center (Off 35th and Broadway), 2863 35th Street, Sacramento. \$5.00. Info: T.Mo at (916) 455-POET.

**29 Sunday**

Luna's hosts **The Pomo Literati**, a two hour poetry/spoken word radio program series to celebrate National Poetry Month. Extreme poetic rarities, pre-beat, to beat, to way past beat with beyond post-modern spoken word, poetry and soundscapes. Also a tribute honorarium of works by S.F. Poet Philip Lamantia. 2-4 pm. Hosted and produced by frank andrick.

**30 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents Jeff Knorr's Sac City poetry class. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Bob Stanley hosts.

On March 18, 2007, I interviewed Judy Halebsky, Sacramento Poetry Center Board Member, PhD Candidate in Performance Studies and Instructor in Asian Theater. We met at Rick's Dessert Diner in Midtown. —*Frank Graham*

**FG: Thanks for taking time from grading papers to do this interview, Judy. What first drew your attention to poetry?**

JH: I really did like poetry from a very young age and I guess I started writing mostly in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade I drafted poems and did visual poetry in high school.

**FG: What is visual poetry? What attracted you to it?**

JH: For me poetry relates to line quality and in the shape of words. The Visual sape on the page. So when you do life drawing, which is a visual art, one of the first things you learn is to draw the line you see, not the line you think you see. So when you draw a plant, you're focusing on the actual line of the thing you think you see—shadows and lines.

I think they are parallel arts, drawing and poetry. Examples are Basquait, Cy Trombley. Ilya Kazlowsky—similar examples origins of words, the gaps between how they are actually used and the concrete formal aspects of words. In particular with knowledge, the word is a euphemism in itself. So it's drawing attention to the signs and systems.

**FG: What direction do you find yourself going in, or find yourself in currently, with respect to poetry?**

JH: It'd be superstitious to think about what I'm planning to do—but I'm planning to move to Tokyo and I'm looking to translate. If I had the space (and ...) to do more visual art I'd do it, but for now I'm concentrating on the page.

**FG: I saw you perform with some intensity, with instrumentation accompaniment, at the poetry center. Can you explain the technique you used?**

JH: That form is San Francisco born, a lineage.

**FG: Like spoken word?**

JH: It's in the tradition of John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Rauschenberg early on.... The first form of zen practice in creative work—a collaboration; first thought, best thought, sort of thing. It was about your creative state, being focused on the process. Collaboration work is about being in a creative space together—people call it experimental because we don't have a name for it. We can only liken it to the other thing (for which) we have a name.

**FG: Is this like Renga—a form you brought to the Tuesday Night Poetry Group meeting at the Hart Center?**

JH: Through history, there are different examples we can find—where I don't think that would relate directly, but one example would



be the poet Adoha—where you spontaneously recite poetry—which is closer to the art happening in the seventies. It's calm, tranquil.

I studied with June Wantanabe at Mills (College). This recent performance was with Dylan Bolles and Edward Schocker. (Watanabe) works with the idea of being in the moment.

**FG: Who are your favorite poets at the moment? Who are you reading?**

JH: (Thinking, long pause) Lee Yung Li and Ilya Kominsky... Robert Hass.

**FG: Is poetry an escape for you, a diversion, or is it more of a requirement of something you are, part of your being?**

JH: Not an escape. More of a grounding. I can fall into poetry. It doesn't shut out the rest of the world. It's not hiding from anything. My friend just had this discouraging experience—and it was the story of being challenged, when people are challenged...

It's like when Buddha put his hand on the ground and he said "the ground knows".

**FG: How do poems come to you? At they spontaneously generated in your mind or are you working on them for days or weeks?**

JH: The general shape happens spontaneously, maybe and then maybe I mean the poem is there—but I'm still writing it, editing. I might start to write a surface—narrative, in a reading voice, rather than closer to whole sentences. I keep going layers under until the poem is complete.

**FG: You've attended Squaw Valley and now you're off to New Hampshire for McDowell (Writer's Colony)—how do these colonies influence your style and skills— contribute to your poetry?**

JH: Squaw Valley was very inspiring—because it was the most fantastic, it was invigorating and affirming being with people to share poetry. Last summer I did Kominsky's workshop – it was like a poetry revival coming back to the soul of poetry. Many think of poetry as being done in "this room somewhere". But poetry is a challenge and a conversation. It is the work of a community, that's why workshops, and being with poets is so important.

**FG: You always seem to be in a good mood, while many think of "the brooding poet"—is there something you're not telling?**

JH: We have this idea that poetry comes from depression and struggle. But I don't think so—I think our past individually comes from when we are at our best – I know there is a long history of depression associated with poets but it (the concept) is more like a creative life is an unconventional life. William Carlos Williams was a medical doctor. Ted Kooser worked at insurance full-time.

**Tap-Root**

Poems by Indigo Moor  
Main Street Rag Publishing  
www.MainStreetRag.com  
87 pgs. \$12 (pb). 2006

**Reviewed by Tom Goff**

In Indigo Moor's ambitious and fine first collection of poetry, only the theatrical section titles (e.g. "Call to Stage," which opens the volume) come off as a bit grandiose, raising or lowering the boom on the reader, clattering the loops along curtain rods as the brocaded, perhaps patched cloths part. This is the only obvious touch about so subtle yet genuine a book. But the flourish does announce a trend: the language will be highly wrought in places: not too different an approach from John Donne's as intimated by Coleridge ("Meaning's press and screw"); the tone and style will undulate from direct speech to high artifice and back. Yet the book's overall purpose stays clear.

Indigo Moor, of Sacramento, California, but originally from North Carolina, is intent in this book on exploring the African-American experience, some of it his, more of it emanating from, and written to re-embrace, the larger region of his birth. It would be unfair to say that *Tap-Root* "transcends the politics of race," for that is not exactly what the book attempts. But the book, while its language has bite, is remarkably un-bitter, even if "sweet" is not the word, either, for the overall tone.

Okay: bittersweet, I guess we must say at last. But read the following excerpt, the conclusion from "Tilling the Soil," for the poet's texturing style:

Beneath the sun's anger, May  
is a wilted field; tobacco leaves  
have dusted to wind.

The bare stalks are stunted  
and resentful. The house wilts  
beneath the bank's anger.

Ghosts squat in the bowl over the mantle.  
Twist the hair around their limbs. Run their  
fingers through our severed locks and chant:

*"My sisters,  
March turns May.  
We hold all our ghosts in  
the trembling of our hands.  
And really, what ever changes."*

"Tilling the Soil" typifies this book's coherent, grammatically forthright, yet associative and cryptic approach to language: history is in these lyrics, but often that history is uttered in

ghostly, almost runic fragments and sentences that might represent the whole African-American race: thinking, dreaming, meditating through its problems.

In "Tilling the Soil," an unspecified landscape in one of the Carolinas is the setting for the speaker's reminiscences of a childhood passed under love, absence, and menace. The caprices of the weather and the state of the tobacco crop are crucial to the boy who has become the adult speaker, as well as to his mother, and his sister; the father, for unknown reasons, is gone, but the boy sneaks meaningful glances at "The darkening circle of her empty / ring finger, a bad weather sign." We are left uncertain about some of the family's particulars (whether they are sharecroppers or outright owners of their troubled house, for instance); but that the house is in trouble, we are left without doubt: the speaker notes that "The house wilts / beneath the bank's anger."

It's remarkable to read a poetry collection so comprehensive in its racial geography yet so sparing in accusations of racist culpability, leveled fingers pointing at white persons in blame or shaming. A case in point is this same poem, where the bank, presumably a white establishment, may be angry, yet the banker is not present in person.

I've been glancing through Harold Bloom's *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited*, which enumerates the many subtle references to theater and play-acting that Shakespeare makes in that play. And it occurs to me that *Tap-Root's* "stage manager" is the impresario, the central intelligence of the book, his mind possessed of an emotional depth equal to his most feeling characters, but of a more comprehensive intellectual range and historical acumen, just as Hamlet (a stand-in for his creator) outdoes even the admirable Horatio.

Once this is realized, the scope of the collection is within grasp: we learn much about the black experience in the South, through credible channelings of historical figures: Ma Rainey, Charles Mingus, Robert Johnson; a knowing affection for jazz and blues is evident. But the near-anonymity of such persons as "Ezra," "Eli," and "John" has the paradoxical effect, not of lessening these characters, but of putting them on an equal eminence with the famous: *they, too, should be historic*, the writer implies. Such hinted protestations, unlike the actress of the Danish Gertrude's

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# pn review continues

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scorn, never protest too much; but the protests, and the eerie quiet they emanate, go ghostly onto the record.

Thus, what the writer insinuates is finally calming and disturbing at once: *this is the world we've inherited, so let's be up and contending with it*. And as soon as we understand the way the framework couches the message, we can enjoy the beautiful particulars: a work song ("Rail Song") reminds us of the recent (apparently successful) search for the actual prototype of John Henry; in any case, the song rings terrifically authentic. There are also small beauties with acid implications:

Solstice: The Parting

Summer, no less love  
for fat Sol's tooth-grins and lies,  
reaches for his hat.

And, though this is the more consoling opening note, not the elegiac chime that closes the last page, the first stanza of "Back Through the Storm Door" is lucid, lilting yet direct:

I left the South broken, a busted wing  
and a crooked eye. Still, I wake mornings  
with the taste of honeysuckle on my tongue.

Such a delicate flavor will yield (in poems like "Metal") to the harsher taste of "brandished / bottles of raw whiskey in cars that growled / deep, their bellies low to the ground." Make no mistake: in Indigo Moor's *Tap-Root*, there is sufficient variety to educate every palate.

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## Bil

by Carol Louise Moon

bil  
bilfa  
bilfa mungo  
bilfa mungo lus  
ants go marching  
City Hall  
pack 'em all in  
bil  
Mr. Bil  
Mr. Bilfamungolus  
Mayor, please  
let's all be seated  
cul-de-sac  
westside cul-de-sac  
circular street  
circular street sign  
no  
dummy  
rectangular sign  
Bilfamungolus Way  
"ayes" have it  
meeting adjourned

## Spiders

by Carol Louise Moon

Cabochoon sleuths milling  
around—  
these creatures seeking  
the advantage,  
ever-vigilant and dogged

sometimes crossing their legs  
to slip by.  
Ugly behind the eyeballs,  
wretchedly alone;  
lacking ethics and propriety.

Repugnant to the core  
and bafflish, too.  
(Willy-whimpers, all of them)  
biting me  
adding injury to their insult.

# Mundial experimental

A poetic look at the world by Tim Kahl

## Materials and methods.

Twenty one poems were engraved on a stone at the Yakushiji temple in Nara in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. The Yakushiji Temple is dedicated to the Buddha of Healing, Yakushi, “the Medicine Master”. The stone on which the twenty-one poems are carved lies on top of another stone that contains the incised outlines of the soles of the feet of the historical Buddha. Thus, the poems that are engraved in the aforementioned stones are known as The Buddha’s Footstone Poems or *bussokusekika*. The *bussokusekika* are largely devotional poems dedicated to the grace and the power of The Enlightened One, who rumor has it, still left his imprints in stone even though he walked off the ground at a distance of the span of four fingers. Scholars have speculated that the poems might very well serve as liturgies for those who walk around the holy footprints in stone as a part of a ritual honoring.

The poems themselves follow the syllabic construction of the basic tanka with one unique twist. Instead of the traditional 5-7-5-7-7 syllables in the five line tanka, the *bussokusekika* adds another seven syllable line at the end to form a six line poem with the following syllable counts 5-7-5-7-7-7. In addition, the sixth line often repeats some motif that was stated in the previous fifth line. In this way the sixth line seems to underscore the proclamation in the fifth line, expanding it or shifting its focus slightly. Some of the *bussokusekika* do not repeat the motif in the last line, and this variation has permitted scholars to refer to the *bussokusekika* as having two general forms.

## Form 1 (with repeating motif)

**Note:** English translation does not always adhere to 5-7-5-7-7-7 syllable count

Köre nö yö Fa  
Uturisaru tö mo  
TökötöFa ni  
Sanökörimase  
Nöti nö yö nö tamë  
Mata nö yö nö tamë

Though this present world  
Will alter and pass away,  
In eternal stone  
Let these remain in being  
For the sake of the worlds to come,  
For the sake of other worlds.

Fitö nö mī Fa  
Egataku areFa  
Nöri nö ta nö  
Yösuka tö nareri  
Tutömë morömorö  
Susume morömorö

The human body  
It is a hard thing to attain:  
It has become  
For the Law a refuge,  
Strive onward, all!  
Press forward, all!

## Form 2 (without repeating motif)

Idakuti nö  
Fikari nö götöki  
Köre nö mī Fa  
Sini nö oFokimi  
Tune ni taguFeri  
OduFëkarazu ya

The fearsome hammer  
And the flash of light: even so,  
This our body;  
The Great Lord of Death  
Is always beside us—  
Should we not be afraid?

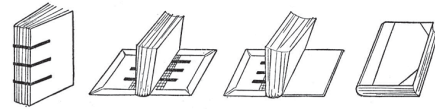
continued on page 11

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**PROJECTS AT HOME.** While there are very few signs of Buddha left for us to peruse in modern America (and even Jesus seems to have taken a break from appearing in front of us within the bark of a sycamore), there are still occasions for That Greater Man to appear. Perhaps, though, these moments arise less as pronouncements and more as small moments of wonderful coincidence. For example, one might casually stroll through the neighborhood and look for “imprints” in the concrete. These normally are attributed to bold children and aimless dogs; however, these assumptions cannot be verified. And who is to say that these are not the handiwork of a playful deity? The difficult part of creating a similar poetry ritual as that at the Yakushiji is circumambulating such wondrous marks in the concrete without drawing attention from the neighbors. Staying within the moment, one might extemporize a *bussokusekika* or one might scrawl a *bussokusekika* in chalk on the sidewalk afterwards. Then you can copy it down for later use. But one must concede that the Buddha might not appear in only the guise of animate matter. The most convincing evidence I have ever seen for the presence of Buddha in my neighborhood is the small imprint of a maple leaf that has been left behind in the sidewalk near my house (is it possible that the Buddha is Canadian?). Similar acts of recitation and walking in circles around the imprint might ensue. But we shouldn't get carried away or else all blemishes in the sidewalk might be seen as possibly the Buddha dragging his shoelaces through the wet concrete or his dropping some change . . . or maybe Zeus bending over and trying to pick it up (hard as these times are for him).

Another possible inspiration for a *bussokusekika* is in the chips in the tile at The Tower Cafe. It has long been suspected that the Buddha statuettes come down off their shelves and are animated at night when no one is looking. In doing so it might be possible that this has led to the chips in the tile floor. Might this not be a similar instance as that which led to the stones at Yakushiji Temple? A *bussokusekika* written in this setting might be either chanted or engraved in a paper napkin, and as you circumnavigate the chips in the tile, pretending that you are really looking at the desserts lined up in the showcase, you might decide to send it along to your server, perhaps even as some sort of compensation for the meal. And when your server stares at you with incredulity, tell him/her, “Hey, it worked for Basho. What's wrong with this country?”

I would like to take a moment and thank Dr. Edwin Cranston whose volume *A Waka Anthology Vol.1: The Gem Glistening Cup* was responsible for allowing me to glean much of the information in this piece. Oh, but were there only a public copy available in the Sacramento area. Thanks SFSU for the loaner.



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## Celebrating Himself

A special Whitman reading  
sponsored by SPC  
June 2, 2007  
Old City Cemetery  
hosted by Patrick Grizzell

**WALT WHITMAN** was born on May 31, 1819, and died on March 26, 1892. On Saturday, June 2nd, the Poetry Center will host a celebration of the birth of Walt Whitman by revisiting a tradition it began in the early 90's and gathering at the Old City Cemetery among the graves of Civil War veterans to read his work aloud. We believe he would approve—being celebrated above the dust of those who participated in the defining era of his life. We don't know if any among those interred there might have physically crossed paths with Whitman in life, but the old nurse held them all dear; if not in his arms, then certainly in his heart. Save the date for a noon brown bag lunch and reading.

More information will be published in the May issue of *Poetry Now*.



SPC's Writers Conference

# poetrynow

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## April 1st

at the Sacramento Poetry Center  
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frank andrick**

*featuring*

The Rolling Stones, Charles Bukowski  
and Guillaume Appolinaire. \$5,000 a plate.  
Special thanks to the Republican Party and  
the National Endowment for the Arts  
for generously underwriting this event.  
*(Wait, did I say April first?)*

Inside this issue of Poetry Now:

**Tom Goff** reviews **Indigo Moor's Tap-Root**

\*\*\*

**Tim Kahl's** *Mundial Experimental*—an in-depth look at  
*bussokusekika* (The Buddha's Footstone Poems)

\*\*\*

A short story by **Peter Grandbois**

\*\*\*

Poems by **Carol Louise Moon** and **Sharon Usher**

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**SPC's High School Poetry**  
**Contest Winners** (7:30pm)

April 23  
**Peter Grandbois** (7:30pm)

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