



# poetry now

February 2008

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

## Poor Poets

to Miguel Ángel Flores

poets go astray  
on the streets  
like chicks fallen  
from their nest

they bump into  
light posts that  
without warning  
cross their path

courteous as ever  
they ask empty  
park benches  
for permission to sit

nobody knows  
not even they  
why wings sprout  
on their shoulders

maybe one day  
they'll finally use  
that key they carry  
forever in their pocket

F  
R  
A  
N  
C  
I  
S  
C  
O  
  
X.  
  
A  
L  
A  
R  
C  
Ó  
N

## Pobres poetas

a Miguel Ángel Flores

por las calles  
rondan poetas  
como pajaritos  
caídos del nido

dan con los postes  
del alumbrado  
que de pronto  
les salen al paso

ceremoniosos  
les piden permiso  
a las bancas vacías  
de los parques

nadie sabe ni ellos  
mismos por qué  
en los hombros  
les brotan alas

un día quizá usen  
por fin esa llave  
que desde siempre  
traen en el bolsillo

**Francisco X. Alarcón** is an acclaimed poet and educator, author of ten volumes of poetry. Alarcón is the recipient of 1993 American Book Award, the 1993 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award, and the 1984 Chicano Literary Prize. In April 2002 he received the Fred Cody Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bay Area Book Reviewers Association (BABRA). He was one of the three finalists nominated for the state poet laureate of California. Alarcón was also awarded the 1997 Pura Belpré Honor Award by the American Library Association and the National Parenting Publications Gold Medal. He also received 2002 Pura Belpré Honor Award, Danforth and Fulbright fellowships, 1998 Carlos Pellicer-Robert Frost Poetry Honor Award by the Third Binational Border Poetry Contest, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.

Alarcón's most recent books are *Sonnets to Madness and Other Misfortunes / Sonetos a la locura y otras penas* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Company 2001) and *From the Other Side of Night / Del otro lado de la noche: New and Selected Poems* (University of Arizona Press 2002). He currently teaches at the University of California, Davis.

**Francisco Alarcón reads on Feb 4 with Eve West Bessier at the Book Collector**

**Poetry Now**, Sacramento's literary review and calendar, is published by the Sacramento Poetry Center, and is funded in part with grants from the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission. Submissions of poems, artwork, reviews, and other work of interest to the Sacramento poetry community are welcome. Note that work submitted to SPC may also appear on SPC's website as well: [sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

Please submit to SPC, 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento, CA 95816, or email to [grahampoet@aol.com](mailto:grahampoet@aol.com)

Poetry Now is distributed in area bookshops, Sacramento County libraries, and by mail to 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, or call SPC at 979-9706.

**Editor:** Bob Stanley

**Poetry Editor:** Frank Graham

**Contributing Editor:** Tim Kahl

**Design Editor:** Elizabeth Krause

The Poet Tree, also known as the Sacramento Poetry Center, is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets – including publications, (Poetry Now and Tule Review), workshops, special events, and an ongoing reading series. Funded primarily by members, SPC is entirely run by a volunteer board of directors. We welcome your input and your interest.

**Board of Directors (as of Jan 2008)**

Bob Stanley, President  
Tim Kahl, Vice President  
Rebecca Morrison, Secretary  
Sandra Senne, Treasurer  
Frank Graham, Member at large  
Mary Zeppa, Member at large  
Stan Zumbiel, Member at large  
Brad Buchanan, Member at large  
Elizabeth Krause, Member at large

Contact us at  
1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento CA 95816  
[bobstanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobstanley@sbcglobal.net)  
916-979-9706  
Or visit our website at  
[www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org).



## president's message

This month we take our poetry show "on the road" for three out of four Mondays – so come join us at a few of the great local bookstores that help keep midtown Sacramento culturally alive. February 4 brings the great Francisco Alarcon to the Book Collector, along with Eve West Bessier. On February 11, Alice Anderson joins Patrick Grizzell for a reading at Time Tested Books on 21<sup>st</sup> Street. February 18, we'll be at HQ for the Arts for an evening with Khiry Malik and Indigo Moor. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, scurry back to the Book Collector for Rob Lozano and Gil Rodriguez. All shows begin at 7:30. I don't know about you, but I like to think of it as a month-long "midtown poetry crawl." Probably not the first.

Save the dates, because April is around the corner – our annual writers' workshop is set for April 4 and 5 – Friday evening and Saturday – and we have confirmation from Ellen Bass, Joshua McKinney, and Camille Norton that they will be leading workshops. There will be a number of other superb workshop leaders, we're still awaiting confirmation. So don't miss it – the reading will be Friday night, and the day-long festival will be on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup>. You can call us now to reserve a space 916-979-9706, or email me at [bobstanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobstanley@sbcglobal.net). We expect this to be a full house, and one of the best workshops for SPC in years.

Wednesday, April 2 promises to be an interesting evening as well – mark your calendar if you want to attend a reception for and a reading by poets laureate from all over California. More information will follow – check SPC's website, or call. We'll get you the details soon on this unique event.

Bob

## Two poems by Alice Anderson

### WISHBONE

You are made of undiscovered truth. Nothing is new: everything is finished. You are made of the moment before the moment the sky turns black. Tell me your dark heart bursts with my silver nectar. Tell me the day for you holds shards of sunlight and wet tongues and fabric rough and lovely. Hold me aloft while we construct debauchery. Tell me trust is an etched white bone dissecting the heart. Carved into one side, "You cannot escape this good fortune." The other, "We will never get tired of this." Take hold of the bone, make a fine wish. Now, pull.

Alice Anderson's first collection of poetry, "Human Nature," won the Elmer Holmes Bobst Prize for Literature from NYU. She holds an MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poems appear widely in journals such as "New York Quarterly" and "New Letters," and are included in the anthologies "On the Verge: Poets and Artists in America," and "American Poetry: The Next Generation." Her noted poem "The Split" (included in almost twenty anthologies to date) will be included in the 20th Anniversary Edition of "The Courage To Heal." She lives and writes in Sacramento, California, having escaped the deep-water bayou hell of post-Katrina Gulf Coast Mississippi. She is the single mama of three miraculous children and is, remarkably, still standing. And smiling. Visit her at [myspace.com/herkind](http://myspace.com/herkind).

**Alice Anderson reads with Patrick Grizzell at SPC's reading at Time Tested Books (1114 21<sup>st</sup> Street) on Mon., Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm**

### LUCK

Locke, California, 1977

When they winch the dead girl up from the Sacramento Delta, she doesn't actually have wings, but her dress in muddy shreds hanging beneath her looks like broken, soggy shadows of wings, or perhaps elegant fins. What is it about dead girls? They gather all the attention. This time the girl is me. I am turning and turning in the cool air, that hook attached to the pale blue belt of my dress, my arms flung back in abandon. You are the Chinese men in the back of Al the Wop's bar, gambling. You throw down cards and make your bet. I am the luck that clings to you as you take the silt and wipe it from my eyes, dipping your tongue into the crust of blood in each ear. Death is like this, a sweet abandon. Nothing can take away this beauty. Still my eyes shine. Still you win the hand. Men stooped over with centuries of memory died to build the rails flashing in sunlight along this levee, men who spoke not one word of the language of this land. The trains run every day over the spot where they died. No one hears their name as they pass. And now I am, hanging from the hook, silenced. You are the bluff. You are the one that risks everything for the shining moment between us when you tie the weight to my sash and throw me, turning and turning, an unbalanced fan of light in the sky, in. Even though you are my killer, you know how to love me. You know I can swim.

## Two poems by Patrick Grizzell

### FOR YOU IN WINTERTIME

Friends, it's all we have,  
this dreaming of each other.  
Whatever you take into your heart  
take it fully and recklessly, as out of instinct.  
Stand in the middle of the road  
and walk in the warmest direction.

Everyone says to say hello.

Patrick Grizzell is the author of Dark Music: Selected Poems and Stories, Chicken Months (about which Robert Bly wrote: "... the poems have a sweet spontaneity and tenderness."), The Goat of Esmeralda, and with painter Jimi Suzuki, a chapbook of sumi paintings and poetry entitled Minotaure Into Night. He has a new book in manuscript entitled Writing In Place. He has many publications in literary presses and anthologies in the U.S., Italy, Japan, and the U.K. PG was a founding member and previous director of the Sacramento Poetry Center. He edited and designed many of the center's literary publications, including Poet News, Poetry Now, Quercus, Rivers and The Tule Review, in addition to many other editing and publishing credits. He studied Art and Lit at California State University, Sacramento with Dennis Schmitz, Kathryn Hohlwein, Jimi Suzuki, Maya Angelou and Leon Golub. He performs music and poetry solo and with his band, Junkyard Burlesque. John Lee Hooker once said he "sound pretty good" on the dobro.

More at: [www.myspace.com/patrickgrizzell](http://www.myspace.com/patrickgrizzell)

**Patrick reads with Alice Anderson at SPC's Reading at Time Tested Books (1114 21<sup>st</sup> Street) on Mon. Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm.**

### A POEM ABOUT WAR

I'm pinched, squeezed. Plinth and slat and wire and plaster and stucco feel too close to jail, the world growing closer to the last noon sun, the last fallen leaf, the last tree. What strikes me is how this all comes down to the way light falls across the room in a certain way, who I might call to talk to about all this.

No bombs are exploding in the yard. Here I'm just thinking about my neighbors, these new immigrants who seem to embrace so much of what's wrong with my homeland and yet whom I find myself loving so much.

Old mothers hold me too, have shaped my bones, skin, eyes, hair, susceptibility to certain diseases, willingness or unwillingness to be moved by these red and gold leaves in a misty sky or my old neighbor, Ludmilla, raking her yard slowly, still bleeding from surgery, or at the old fence squeaking against the will of the wind, breaking free at the rot point where once new redwood is now growing closer to the woodpile. Nothing is wasted.

Yet, I pick at my life today, thinking all thoughts at once, cleaning out the shed, one closet, a stack of papers sorted and mostly gone to the fireplace, tend a bit to the slow garden, check the last peppers and tomatoes, rake a spot for winter vegetables. In another month I'll rake up these old leaves for compost with my splint of a rake and think of another group of boys clutching their porn magazines packing them into a duffel and stumble, blinking in fear and testosterone, off to war.

And that's the thing, isn't it? That's it. The one I would make the call to and talk about the insanity that weaves through the fall. The bird that darts by is shot down by the sunlight, the little slow plane that bounces on the air dives into the chimney, the president steps out of the television and raids my refrigerator.

What I know is a thimbleful of opinion and zealousness. But I'm in love, so what do I care? That's it, isn't it? What love does and what its absence does, in the world too. This pinch, this war, this man who would rule the world with his uncannily perfect blend of arrogance and stupidity, who makes all of us hated, all of our old mothers lining up in opposition and with what word can we defend ourselves? Out of step, everything is handed down. Love the world too.

What else can be said? Write your congressman. Stop paying taxes. March. Stand on a corner alone with a sign and be flipped off and cursed at. Plant vegetables. Only smoke imported tobacco and homegrown pot. Don't shop at Wal-Mart. Make a list.

My eyes widen. I'm restless suddenly. I used to be a scrapper. I know what it is to want to punch somebody. I know what it is to split open a knuckle on a tooth. A kind of satisfaction in it. I smash the news off, push the president into the freezer, stick a chair in front of the door handle. I go get my old neighbor, help her across the street, ask her if she knows how to butcher a pig. I'm in luck. She does. Not speaking English, she makes the motions for: first you pierce the jugular, hang it up, it goes to sleep. I take her by the arm. We head into the kitchen. I kick the chair away from the door. And that's it. Where it stops. Where I come back. Go to sleep. Wake up. Hurt no one. Love the world.

## Sacramento Area Literary Calendar February 2008

### 1 Friday

*The Other Voice*, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis presents the award-winning husband and wife poetry team: **Carol and Laverne Frith**. 7:30 to 9:00 in the library of the Church at 27074 Patwin Road, Davis. Refreshments and Open Mike follow - bring along a poem or two to share.

### 2 Saturday

All are invited to *Escritores del Nuevo Sol's* writing workshop and potluck. 11am. at La Raza Galeria Posada, 1024 22nd Street, Sacramento. For info call Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or [joannpen@comcast.net](mailto:joannpen@comcast.net). Web: [www.escritoresdelnuevosol.com](http://www.escritoresdelnuevosol.com)

### 4 Monday

**Sacramento Poetry Center @The Book Collector** presents Francisco Alarcon and Eve West Bessier. Art Mantecon hosts - at The Book Collector -1008 24<sup>th</sup> Street (24<sup>th</sup> and J). 7:30pm

### 5 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

**7 Thursday** – *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA at Luna's Café. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill. Festivities begin at 8pm and there will be an open mic as well.

### 9 Saturday

*Culture Collection* features **Candy**, vocalist **Carla Fleming**, **Bene' Bailey**, **Alicia Pratt** and **Supanova**. Plus open mic. 6391 Riverside Blvd in Greenhaven. 2 – 4 pm. FREE!

### 11 Monday

**Sacramento Poetry Center @ Time Tested** presents a reading by **Patrick Grizzell** and **Alice Anderson**. Time Tested Books 1114 21st Street, 447-5696. 7:30 pm, FREE. Hosted by Mary Zeppa.

### 12 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

### 13 Wednesday

Rattlesnake Press presents **Don and Elsie Feliz** at The Book Collector, 1008 24th Street, Sacramento, to celebrate the release of *TO BERLIN WITH LOVE*, their new chapbook of poetry and photographs of their time as newlyweds in Germany during the building of the Berlin Wall. Also appearing that night will be a littlesnake broadside, "Going the Distance," from CARLA WIKE, plus Vol. 2 of *Conversations*, the second anthology in the Rattlesnake Interview Series by B.L. KENNEDY. Refreshments and a read-around will follow; bring your own poems or somebody else's. 7:30-9 PM. More info: [kathykieth@hotmail.com/](mailto:kathykieth@hotmail.com/).

*And coming up in March at SPC - (back at HQ for the Arts) . . .*

### March 3

Sacramento Poetry Center features **Julia Levine** and **Rick Campbell**. Hosted by Tim Kahl  
HQ for the Arts – 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street. 7:30pm

### March 10

Sacramento Poetry Center presents a chapbook celebration for **Edythe Schwartz**, in honor of her new collection, *Exposure*. Hosted by Bob Stanley.  
HQ for the Arts – 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street. 7:30pm

### 14 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](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

### 16 Saturday

*Underground Books* features **The Finkleman**s (Joe and Susan), **Jock Smith** and vocalist **Jessica Teddington**. 2814 35th Street off 35th and Broadway. 7 - 9 p.m. \$3.00

ONE HUMAN FAMILY, featuring Poetry for a Changing World, by Red Fox Underground poets Taylor Graham, Irene Lipshin, Moira Magneson, Brigit Truex, Kate Wells, Wendy Williams. Cozmic Café, 594 Main St., Placerville, CA 95667. (530) 642-8481. 8:00 p.m.

### 18 Monday

**SPC celebrates Black History Month** presenting **Indigo Moor & Khiry Malik**. Check <http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org> for Location Announcement. 7:30pm

### 19 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

### 21 Thursday

*Poetry Unplugged* at Luna's Café. 8pm. hosted by Frank Andrick. Free.

### 23 Saturday

*The Show* features **NerCity** from Oakland, **Tamara Blue** from Pasadena and **Judah 1** from Los Angeles. 2863 35th Street off 35th and Broadway. 7 – 9 pm. \$5.00

### 25 Monday

**Sacramento Poetry Center @ The Book Collector** presents **Gil Rodriguez** and **Rob Lozano**. Art Mantecon hosts - at The Book Collector -1008 24<sup>th</sup> Street (24<sup>th</sup> and J). 7:30pm

### 26 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

### 28 Thursday

*Poetry Unplugged* features **Joe Donohue**, **Ed Bowers**, and **Matt Amott** at Luna's Café. 8pm. hosted by B.L. Kennedy. Free.

**Swords and Existentialism**

We saved the world a couple of times,  
in some fields at the back of town.  
We held swords and trudged through wet grass.

The wilderness we used was so cold and wet  
my socks would be soaked. it was only because the place was alive-  
only a real living environment can soak you like that.

Our weapons could have been deadly;  
sharp enough to cut, in-authentic mall shop weapons  
that you still wouldn't want at your throat.

My profession was necromancy and there is some  
romance to it, influencing the dead you know,  
romancing the dead, but not in a perverted way.

We had a dark knight, a good soul  
being corrupted by something from within  
(he was trying to tell us something).

His identical twin was a hero, a simple brawler-  
the kind of role a father is drawn to  
and is forced to play anyways.

Kain was a Dragoon, an annoyingly specific  
creation with limited flexibility and clearly  
defined qualities (not really a surprise).

There was a clearing we found that made me feel so pagan  
I could barely see the ends of it and the moon was close-  
it was one of those places where time doesn't really matter.

## Switzerland

*A. Gerwer*

The metronome completes its pace set.  
As always;  
they all break out.  
Dance intensely passionate, at their concentric circle spinning.  
Of course, to dance  
is their only living action of the day.

Strange mechanical melodies like silver crystals tapped with wands  
make the music, set the pace  
for Grandfather's little men and women his  
wooden children  
in their painted Lederhosen, living in the music's shrill joy.

I check into all of the densest places of the darkness,  
nervous from the beckoning power of his soul's silver music,  
the abrupt joy that doesn't recognize discretion;  
only the movement of time.

Too young too remember if he told us about the mountains and himself  
I only can half-taste the chocolates in their provincial flag wrappers  
that tasted so much better  
and I'm sure his son would say, "Like real chocolate."

Grandfather the clock-maker has built us the myth of his home  
where people much like his carvings,  
traditionally dressed and possessed with happiness so prevailing it gets into everything, even celebrate and make  
hobby of time.

In the interrupted silence of night,  
in the empty space of the dormant living room opened  
by dancing and spirit song  
the myth is an alien unreality  
twisted up with my fears of the supernatural.  
what is a greater gift than that feeling of the alien?  
The ancient-new?

## To be Happy:

*Katie Watson*

You tell me to be happy-  
That it's easy,  
Like a breath;  
of flowers growing skyward-  
Stems avoiding, thoughts of Death.  
You ask me to be joyous-  
Like a girl of twentyone.  
With all the doors before her,  
She will  
Open, every one.  
You want me to be praiseful,  
Like the preacherman,  
In steps.  
Rejecting thoughts of darkness  
In favor of his peps.  
But I will never be these things,  
and that is just because-  
I'm mounded to my sadness,  
It's the veil that makes my laws.  
And colors my world gray and  
Dampens every day.

## The Drums of War

*Gerald Bosacker*

No more War, the Maiden cried.  
Brave new soldiers she would ignore  
and pray they all, with love denied,  
would shed the urge to march to war.

Die for Peace, the Kings decide.  
We must choose priests, Bold Kings adore.  
and seek to bless our countryside  
with dead men downed on distant shore.

Another war! sad parents cried.  
When War Gods call for sons once more.  
we must raise girls, or true gender hide  
for it's just men who march to war.

Dead for Peace, and earthworms glide  
through flesh turned loam, from grisly gore,  
but leave eye sockets opened wide  
to tearless stare for evermore.

## The Last Great Killing

*David Humphreys*

*(his clothing was white as snow,  
and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
his throne was fiery flames,  
and its wheels were burning fire.)*

- Judgment of the Ancient One,  
Book of Daniel, 9

The last century watched newsreels of horrendous  
conflagrations and atrocities beyond description  
in safe American movie theaters. What brought  
this about and who has never read “Flanders

Fields” or “Death of the Ball Turret Gunner”?

Who will remember now as the approaching  
storm swirls bleached with skulls stacked in catacombs  
beside blood stained fields green with forget-  
fulness, nuclear winter long with dark eternity?

What innocent child will bring us bright flowers,  
fill with light laughter warm afternoon hours?



*It is time again for the annual*

## **SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER POETRY CONTEST**

This year's entry fee is \$4 per poem.

First, second and third prizes will be awarded [\$100, \$50, \$25].

In addition, 10 honorable mentions will receive \$10 gift certificates.

Please send two copies of each poem, one with your name and contact info, another without any identifying information on it.

No restrictions on length, subject or style.

Judging will be done by a suitably notable area poet whom SPC will announce [in other words, a poet to be named later].

Deadline: February 15, 2008

Fee: \$4 per poem

**Send poems to:**  
**Sacramento Poetry Center Poetry Contest**  
**The Sacramento Poetry Center**  
**1719 25th Street**  
**Sacramento, CA 95816**

## **THE SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER PRESENTS OUR SECOND ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL POETRY CONTEST**

Winners will receive prizes including a \$100.00 Grand Prize, books, scholarships to the SPC Writers' Conference (April 5, 2008), and publication in The Tule Review, Sacramento Poetry Center's literary journal, or in Poetry Now, the official monthly newsletter of The Sacramento Poetry Center.

Winners and Honorable Mentions will also be invited to perform their work on April 14, 2008 at The Sacramento Poetry Center's venue at the HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th Street in Sacramento. No entry fees required.

Deadline: March 15, 2008  
(3 poems maximum per student, please.)

Send poems to:  
High School Poetry Contest  
The Sacramento Poetry Center  
1719 25th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816

## Cornerstones

*Eve West Bessier*

(Listening to Thelonious Monk play his composition, 'Well You Needn't')

This is Monk with a honky tonk swagger  
across the keys, loose wet, thick as a swamp,  
but light as crow's feet on new snow.

Different from later versions, other hands.  
Harder, more raw, salty, open, unmannered.

Fingers moving like rebel water over wicked rocks,  
pleasing inner demons and packs of fallen angels.  
Grunting all the while as if each note is born, not played.

The tune is short, curt and without solos.  
Just Monk's mind monk-keying, playing milestones  
that become cornerstones.

**Eve West Bessier** is a author of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. She was born in the Netherlands and has lived in Davis, California for the past two decades. She currently works as a Certified Life Coach and Vocal Coach, and teaches writing workshops and residencies. She worked for The University of California, Davis for eighteen years in educational research, program development and evaluation. She holds a Master of Education from UC Davis and has done graduate course work in English and creative writing at California State University, Sacramento. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing from San Francisco State University.

She is a performing jazz vocalist, a visual artist and a promoter of community arts programs. She has received several literary awards including The Kathryn Hohlwein (2000), First Place for Poetry in The California Focus on Writers Contest (2000), and Second Place in the Sacramento News & Review's Short Story Contest (2001). Her poetry was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2003. She has two chapbooks, *Roots Music* and *Splash* published by dPress, Sebastopol, 2002 and 2003.

**Eve West Bessier reads on Feb 4 with Francisco Alarcón at the Book Collector**

## Mornings

*Shanti Hedderston*

There used to be a blood- orange sunrise  
under crisp desert skies  
black starry air sucked in each lap  
a rising halo of light  
left us giddy, collapsed on the track

we burned our lungs on sips of syrupy sweetness  
from a paper cup, half laced with ice  
and alcohol, warmth slipped through  
where I lived sixteen-like  
a long bad dream

once running faster, was enough  
two friends I cried with  
twenty I smiled at or tried at least  
one I never could talk to enough  
before she died

each year crawled after us  
they followed me whenever I ran there  
they were, dark mornings and  
grey ghosts of song that made the heart  
beat- race again , but fear slammed shut.

This sparkly silent new year's eve  
the dark sun ball fell out of her distance  
pulled me up to kneel on the cold hard street  
under beads of night, God dripping from the cloudy  
coastal fog, I stretch like grains of sand

and feel a saving pulse

## *Two Poems by Carlena Wike*

### Memories of Spring Midwinter

Thirty years have flown since that first vow.  
And we have lost some passion, yes, some pace--  
The crows press footprints underneath your brow  
while winter walks your forehead and your face.  
When you hold me I am fuller, soft,  
and spring has gone to autumn in my hair--  
Scant trace of former youth remains that, sloughed,  
left snakeskin where my arms were firm and fair.  
Yet when you kiss me, it's a girl responds.  
She gasps to see your silver hair turn brown--  
Old springs well up to fill our winter ponds  
and I step into youth as in a gown.  
I love you as you are, but I concede  
That, when you touch me, thirty years recede.

### COUPLE- ETTES

Second husbands seldom thirst  
For reasons why you left the first.

Second husbands, in a stew  
Can tell you why the first left you!

## Frank Graham *interviews* Deborah J. Hunter

Deborah J. Hunter is as diverse as her poetry. Actor, director and playwright, Hunter is also a board member of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill-Tulsa, the Mental Health Association of Tulsa and the Oklahoma Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council. Additionally, Ms. Hunter serves on the corporate board of T.K. Wolf, Inc. She is the Poet-in-Residence for Hillcrest Hospital's Art of Healing program and her poetry has appeared in Aroostook Review, Nimrod International Poetry Journal, Curbside Review, Another Sun (U.K.) and numerous other publications. In 2000, she was presented with the Jingle Feldman Award. Hunter is also the parent of a child with schizophrenia.

FG: Who are your favorite poets?

**DH: Pablo Neruda is my favorite. But, that changes from time to time.**

FG: You do a lot of spoken word. Why is that style so important to you?

**DH: I love to hear language and I believe that poetry is meant to be spoken out loud. I love the rhythm of meter and the texture of words, the emotional nuances. I also enjoy the immediacy of response from a live audience.**

FG: What do you want people to take from your poems?

**DH: Much of my work is related to social issues. Many of my poems reach my audiences on an emotional level. If my audiences have been moved at all, whether through drama, humor or thoughtfulness, that's enough for me. I rarely wonder if they "get it." I love it, though, when people want to discuss my work.**

FG: "A Strong, Black Woman" is one of my favorite poems. Can you tell me a little about where this poem? Where the voice in this poem is from?

**DH: I wanted to write a piece about a black woman who, outwardly, was the picture of the strong, black woman, struggling with the harsh realities of her life, while maintaining her dignity. Yet, inside, she was having a silent, secret breakdown. Many women, regardless of their race or background, have told me that "A Strong, Black Woman" is their story.**

FG: Did acting come first, or was it poetry? You seem to get a lot from the on-stage experience -- Why do you think that is?

**DH: I was a poet first. I started writing when I was a child. I lettered in theater in high school, mostly for directing. I didn't do any acting after high school until someone sent me to an audition as a result of seeing me do spoken word. The life that I give to my poetry is simply natural to me. Why would I give so much emotion in writing, put so much meaning in my words and then fail to convey that with my voice? For me, spoken word is a bridge between reading and acting.**

FG: In your work as a mental health advocate and for others, does poetry ever come into play? Or does your advocacy and understanding contribute to poetry in some way?



**DH: As I said before, I was a poet first. Advocacy came after I was an adult. Many of my poems and, of course, my one woman performance piece, "Amazons, Gypsies and Wandering Minstrels" is definitely my effort to advocate for people who are marginalized and it is written in poetic monologues. The poems, "A Strong, Black Woman," "The Red Shoes," and "My Poems Are Too Loud" touch on issues that concern me: mental illness, homelessness, domestic violence, homophobia and others.**


FG: What have you been able to personally "process" through the voice of spoken word?

**DH: The first half of "Amazons, Gypsies and Wandering Minstrels" is based on my experience as the parent of an adult child with schizophrenia. Each time that I perform it, I am better able to deal with the emotional enormity of the deep sense of loss, hopelessness and helplessness that I felt and still feel sometimes. But, I also gain so much because I am able to give voice to others who, for whatever reason, have those same feelings.**

FG: The first occasion I recall meeting you was with the Master Poets program at the Harwelden Institute with Naomi Shihab Nye (who lead our workshop) -- Are there other poets or poems that have had an impact on your life as a poet or otherwise?

**DH: Maya Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman" was a source of encouragement when I was going through a rough period of time about 25 years ago. Naomi Shihab Nye helped when she pointed out to me how effective my use of present tense was for giving a sense of immediacy to one of my poems. When I listened to the poet, Ai, I knew I was on the right path with my poetic monologues. It was ntozake shange's poetic play, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf," that made me think seriously about using my monologues to create a stage piece.**

<a href="http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org">www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org</a>	FEBRUARY 15, 2008 – DEADLINE FOR SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER'S ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST – SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS!	February 2008  sacramento's literary calendar & review
<p><b>poetrynow</b></p>		
A PUBLICATION OF THE SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER		
<div data-bbox="716 142 1425 869">  </div> <div data-bbox="1430 111 1516 926"> <p>Come see Patrick Grizzell and Alice Anderson at Time Tested Books on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 7:30 PM</p> </div>		

<p><b>poetrynow</b></p> <p><b>The Poet Tree, Inc.</b> 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street Sacramento, CA 95816</p>	<p>spc blog: <a href="http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.blogspot.com">www.sacramentopoetrycenter.blogspot.com</a></p> <p><b>Every Tuesday:</b> SPC POETRY WORKSHOP 7:30 PM, Hart Senior Center, 27<sup>th</sup> &amp; J ● Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem</p>
<p>FEBRUARY 2008 Mondays, 7:30 PM</p> <p>FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> <b>Francisco Alarcon &amp; Eve West Bessier</b></p> <p>FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> <b>Patrick Grizzell &amp; Alice Anderson</b></p> <p>FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> <b>Indigo Moor &amp; Khiry Malik</b></p> <p>FEBRUARY 25<sup>TH</sup> <b>Gil Rodriguez &amp; Rob Lozano</b></p>	<div data-bbox="829 1520 1507 1961">  </div> <p>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.</p>