

July 2008

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

SPC 2008 Poetry Contest Winners

1st

Susan Wolbarst

Diagnosis

2nd

Sally Wood

Thyme Leaves

3rd

Mary Herrema Giudice

In the Dark Corridors of Northern California

Honorable Mentions

Sally Wood

Violin Practice

H. Allen Blair

Imprint

Merle Martin

Life: A Ballet

Cynthia Linville

Great-Grandfather

Marilyn Wallner

Free Fall

Nancy Wahl

What Things There Are

I Cannot See

Joyce Odam

Silence As Its Own Desire

Red Sliderr

Spirit of the Ground

Renee Marie

Cry Baby

Susan Wolbarst

Black Widow

Lisa A. Jones

Leaves

Ray Hadley

Skiping Stones across a River

Diagnosis

Susan Wolbarst

There is a mysterious weightlessness
waiting for the diagnosis.

Big empty moments treading water,
over my head in the present tense
knowing that off in some lab, my chatty cells
tell my life's secrets to strangers.

I'm idly wondering if, someday,
this aimless hour will be remembered
as better than it seems right now,
because of what I don't yet know.

I also have to wonder
if my future, already, is compacting,
becoming small enough to fit inside a fortune
cookie,
shrinking down to one line,
to one word,
breathe.



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.

Please submit to SPC, 1719 25th Street, Sacramento, CA 95816, or email to PoetDawn2008@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.

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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.

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**Sacramento
Metropolitan
Arts Commission**

president's message

At last we announce our contest winners for the 2008 SPC Poetry Contest, and three poets from Davis have swept the top spots this year! Congratulations to **Susan Wolbarst**, whose poem *Diagnosis* took first place; **Sally Wood**, who wrote the second place poem *Thyme Leaves*; and **Mary Giudice**, who wrote the third place poem, *In the Dark Corridors of Northern California*. We'd like to invite these three poets, plus the authors of the poems receiving Honorable Mentions, to the awards ceremony reading at HQ for the Arts on Friday night, July 18th at 7:30 pm. Congratulations to all the poets who entered for your fine work, we thank you for your entries!

SPC board member **Rebecca Morrison** assisted the Towe Auto Museum with this year's poetry contest, and the chapbook of the best poems submitted, *Free Wheeling*, is now available from the museum, by mail, at 2200 Front Street, Sacramento 95818. Kaela Nelson, Towe's marketing director, reports that she has received many compliments on this year's collection. On behalf of your local poetry center, allow me to remind you that to save gas this summer, you can always read poems about driving! Thanks to Rebecca for her hard work on the project.

For July we have a full schedule of Monday nights at SPC – on July 7 **Frances Kakugawa** reads, on July 14 **Emmanuel Siguake** begins hosting his second Monday series with actor, activist, and award-winning author **Ali Salaam**. On July 21, **Yang Her** reads her work at a benefit event for *My Sister's House* – a haven for battered Asian and Pacific women. For July 28, hostmaster **Tim Kahl** brings poets **Susan Palwick** and **Ellen Klages** to SPC. A July-full of Monday evenings in the surprisingly temperate (read "air-conditioned") halls of SPC on 25th Street. Hope to see you there!

Bob Stanley

Thyme Leaves

Sally Wood

She edges her walker
near the kitchen window
overlooking the water.
Her old eyes frown on the pan
where chicken thighs sizzle.
“Heat may be too high.”
Her swollen fingers, bent gentle,
find her daughter’s shoulder.
“How can I help you, Sweetie?”

Her daughter, frantic
with the sauce boiling over,
and the feeding of too many,
waiting hungry in the living room,
wipes her hand on her apron,
knots of her mother’s embroidery
under her fingertips.
“The thyme needs leafing.”

I spread the bundle of thyme,
growing a soft gray pile
on the scrubbed cutting board.
She clutches the counter,
remedies her balance,
eases her head around,
“How much?”
Her daughter leans close,
compensation for the refused hearing aids,
“One and a half teaspoons. More is better.”
She watches her mother worry the fragrant sprigs.

We want this moment to last,
Grandma revisiting herself.
We’ll use bushels of thyme
if it comes to that.
The stems are bare too soon.
Leaning hard on the walker
she slides one foot,
then another to the sofa,
back to vacant dreaming.
Lost to us again.

Poema guerra

Francisco X. Alarcón

la guerra
es la razón
sin razón
sin sentido
sin clave
sin cordura
la guerra es
una gran mentira
postulada como verdad
un socavón
oscuro sin final
a la vista
la guerra es
la negación
de la auto-decepción
la imposición
del poder
por el poder mismo
la guerra es
el terror
a gran escala
sin leyes
inmoral
inhumano
la guerra es
la sangrienta
bestia de la avaricia
que justifica
todos los crímenes
contra la humanidad
la guerra es
un monstuo
devorador
que se alimenta
con la juventud
de las naciones
la guerra es
un río de lágrimas
tristeza y desesperación
banderas
enmascarando fétreos
como excusas
la guerra es
lo que el mal
es para el bien
cruel
desalmado
sin esperanza
la guerra es
una noche perenne
caída a mediodía
nos ciega
nos aciaga
nos niega
la guerra es
lo que la muerte
es para la vida
todo lo que
este poema
no está a favor
la guerra es
siempre guerra
contra todos nosotros

War Poem

war is
reason
gone mad
senseless
clueless
insane
war is
a big lie
posted as truth
a dark hole
with no end
in sight
war is
the denial
of self deception
the rule
of power
for power’s sake
war is
terror in
grand scale
lawless
immoral
inhuman
war is
the bloody
beast of greed
that justifies
all crimes
against humanity
war is
a devouring
monster
feeding
on the youth
of nations
war is
a river of tears
sorrow and despair
flags
masking caskets
as excuses
war is
what evil
is to good
ruthless
heartless
hopeless
war is
a perennial night
fallen at midday
it blinds us
it pains us
it denies us
war is
what death
is to life
everything
this poem
is not for
war is
always war
against us all

*This poem was read as part of the Sac Poets Against War Reading at Sac Area Peace Action on May 14, 2008. Alarcón’s latest book is **Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú** (Children’s Book Press, 2008), a bilingual collection of poems celebrating wildlife and a natural wonder of the Americas.*

Lisa Jones *interviews* Ellen Bass

Ellen Bass is an award winning poet with a new book, The Human Line (Copper Canyon Press, 2007) I met her for tea, after attending her reading at Sacramento Poetry Center's Annual Conference, where she also led a workshop packed with poets. She's been teaching creative writing since 1974, in Santa Cruz and in association with the MFA program at Pacific University. She's also a well known non-fiction author on the subject of sexual abuse (The Courage to Heal).

Billy Collins gave The Human Line this review: "Ellen Bass's frighteningly personal poems about sex, love, birth, motherhood, and aging are kept from mere confession by the graces of wit, an observant eye, an empathetic heart, and just the right image deployed at just the right time. The Human Line is full of real stunners." The poems range from powerful meditations on caring for her mother just before her death, more philosophical reflections on the moral issues of our times, to the sweeter moments of everyday relationships. Another book of poems, Mules of Love (BOA, 2002) won the Lambda Literary Award. Her work has been published widely and she's previously been awarded The Pushcart Prize, The Pablo Neruda Prize and the New Letters Prize.

The Human Line includes a popular poem about a mature couple kissing at an airport gate, entitled "Gate C22." It is posted on her website (www.ellenbass.com) and it is one of her favorites for readings. Here is an excerpt:

But the best part was his face. When he drew back
and looked at her, his smile soft with wonder, almost
as though he were a mother still open from giving birth,
as your mother must have looked at you, no matter
what happened after — if she beat you or left you or
you're lonely now — you once lay there, the vernix
not yet wiped off, and someone gazed at you
as if you were the first sunrise seen from the Earth.
The whole wing of the airport hushed,
all of us trying to slip into that woman's middle-aged body,
her plaid Bermuda shorts, sleeveless blouse, glasses,
little gold hoop earrings, tilting our heads up.

Jones: What made this poem become one of your favorites to share with others?

Bass: I like to read it because people enjoy it, but there is also a private story that has nothing to do with the content of the poem. The events of the poem took place when I was delayed and I was a little bit irritable that I was going to be late, I was actually running from one ticket counter to another trying to get my family on another flight and then here is unfolding this moment that, if my plane hadn't been delayed, I never would have gotten to witness or write about.

Also, I wrote that poem when I was at Eselan. I was there with my daughter and her then partner, who were sharing the room. The partner snored. Around 4:30 in the morning I couldn't go back to sleep, because there was this enormous snoring in the room. So I got up and decided not to fight it. I bundled up and worked on that poem and got the draft of it.

I always feel like if only I could do that with everything, or at least more things in my life--take this thing that seems like a pain in the neck, an irritant and instead be able to say "well, then what?" "Oh, then what you could do is go out and write this poem!" It was full of lessons for me.

Jones: You have said that one should never ignore what the muse offers us, we shouldn't make her angry. Even if we never show the poem to anyone, we should always work with whatever she brings us, but are you more comfortable with one kind of poem over another?

Bass: There are poems that are more fun . . . There are poems I would want to write, but they are not being made available to me or I can't find them. Probably every poet alive today would like to be able to write a poem about Iraq. You feel like you should. I mean "You're a poet and you can't say anything?! Nothing? Not one little poem? I would love to be able to do that. I have the Pray for Peace poem that I wrote very early on . . . But that's all that I have been able to do . . . If I could I would write more political poems. They are very hard for me, or anyone, to write without being polemical, without descending into mere rhetoric.

Jones: Can you name a poet that you feel deserves greater recognition, one that inspires you?

Bass: Frank Gaspar. He's an ecstatic poet, a poet of the night. He connects to my heart, so much. In a lot of his poems he'll be right in his neighborhood . . . even at his own writing table. With his poems we are in this incredibly ordinary scene, but there is something very cosmic going on at the same time. We never forget the stars are shining down on us, we never forget we are in this huge swirl of the cosmos."

Bass has also been influenced by Dorianne Laux and Joseph Millar. The three work on writing prompts together almost daily and they teach a class at Eselan. Laux came up when I asked about the organization of her book:

Up until the eleventh hour, the mother poems were distributed throughout the book. Cecelia Wallach said "why don't you put them all together." Dorianne Laux said "put them in the front . . . It's like if you are having a visit with somebody and your mother has just died, you wouldn't wait until you were saying goodbye to say 'Oh and by the way my mother just died!'"

Later in the interview, Bass brought up what it was like to write about her mother, which led her to a question I asked her earlier in the day at her workshop--how a poet makes the transition from writing something that might serve some personal/therapeutic purpose to a poem that is aesthetically effective, communicating with a broader audience:

I was really aware, in writing the poems about my mother's death, of how fortunate I felt to be a poet. After my mother died I pictured that I would do various things--get pictures together from her life and make a kind of display, an altar . . . things I would do as part of the grieving process.

I didn't do any of them. All I did was write poems and that was so clearly what was helping me in the grieving process and while she was ill too. During the very last week or so, I didn't have much time, because I was trying to attend to her and also connect with the other family members, but here and there I would write 3 or 4 lines and just jot down things that she said and that was so wonderful to have . . .

Since writing the Human Line, I went through another incredibly difficult period emotionally and I just felt saved by poetry. I felt like I would really have no idea how I would manage without poems. When I was writing, although I was [already] dealing with the feelings very directly, something became so manageable and then of course when I stopped writing the poem [they stopped being manageable]--not just the product of getting the poem, but the actual process of the writing . . . A lot of poets say "poetry saved my life." It does for me, I really do feel that.

I think of it as very tactile even though it isn't. It is totally abstract, but I think of it as though it were clay--that you are making a shape out of experience . . . You were asking [earlier, how to move personal poems to a point where they appeal to a larger audience] . . . You make that larger connection through the craft. On the one hand the craft is something very . . . small, like grammar--getting the right word for this, knowing where you want to break that line, getting a good metaphor. On the other hand, the craft is really what makes it possible for you to find the *human* experience in your experience, or to place your experience in the human experience . . .

So in that way, I think [writing] does, what meditation does for people, what a spiritual connection does--where you say "O.K. this is my suffering, but it is part of the human suffering." It is very unique, but it is also incredibly common. You stop thinking: I shouldn't have to have this, I don't want this." Instead you look at it. [Not] judging it--[not] the "I like", "I don't like." . . . Instead you say "What is the nature of it? . . . What is the texture of it? What is this experience really about? What is it like?" I mean that's *metaphor*--"what is it like?"

In the Buddhist teaching, instead of trying to get away from your pain, you lean into it. You move closer to it instead of always trying to escape. I think that's really what the craft of poetry allows you to do. It is interesting that something technical--like a woodworker learning to make a really good dovetail joint --is actually what allows you to do something that is so transformative.

Smelly Guy and Goldilocks

Ann Wehrman

They enter as one,
partners in life and crime,
slip in the door of the store almost daily
look around, touch the merchandise,
establish their presence, take their time, hang out.
Sometimes, once a month,
they buy music, a great deal of music,
spend generously, outrageously when one considers that

Smelly Guy and his partner, Goldilocks,
live in just one suit of clothes each,
live on the streets, in and out of garbage bins,
their greasy, unwashed hair and soiled jackets
rank with sweat, with filth from the streets,
garbage, excrement, rot,
with danger, loneliness, hopelessness, fear--
but at least they have each other--
nowhere to stay but maybe a shed--I heard they stay in a shed--
how is it to live in a shed?
It hurts to imagine.
It hurts to worry about Smelly Guy and Goldilocks.

Unaware of their hygienic failure,
they talk to the customers, especially Smelly Guy talks,
sharing an amazing wealth of information about
the history of rock'n'roll with anyone who'll listen,
his knowledge is astounding, really;
if things were different, he could teach a course,

but the customers, as I, quickly catch his rank smell
as he continues, inspired,
to spout obscure details about stars' lives and
memorable performances.
The customers politely step back, gagging slightly
the hardier ones perhaps listen awhile longer--
I confess that I avoid the pair, try to anyway;
I can't bear them near me; the putrid smell
lingers in my nostrils, way back deep
into my throat and mouth
all night when I work,
and when I go home,
I carry the sad, rotten lives of Smelly Guy and Goldilocks
with me like a bruise in my heart,
like a sore that won't heal, like a part of me.

Hollow Ink

Henry Chen

Like fire red, he burns through the paper,
furiously scribbling and scratching marks of ideas.
Pencils move to fill the pages with imagination,
yet no amount of paper can hold his unlimited
thoughts
and infinite emotions of teal, ruby, aquamarine.
He writes for hours not knowing the seconds pass.
To him, there is not time, but only ink and paper.
He does not feel the bitter bite of frozen
temperatures
For he only needs one burning hand to decorate
the page
like an angry artist splattering the canvas.
He doesn't see what words he writes,
but only the next black line waiting to be filled.
He does not hear the whistling winds, crashing
cars
or the screeching speakers that howl outside.
He only hears the colors and images of the words
as they are scratched into the never ending
thoughts.
But then the ink runs dry and only screeching
scratches
which litter the last lines of post paper exist.
The world comes crashing back with noise, color,
light, cold.
He is aware of nothing and remembers even less.
He starts to look back expecting pride and
accomplishment,
but is only given tears of resentful anger as the
pages
are only filled with scribbled scratches and
misshaped marks.

Breath

Gabrielle Todd

Take one breath to notice me,

That when you see me, I am not only a different person, but a
different
character.

For my nature of being is one.

I feel not only responsible for the things I have done, but the things
that
I am going to do in the time, present and future.

I am now about to turn 15, and that is one step closer to being an
adult.

So please don't look at me like a child!

For I am not only a child that needs to be loved, but an adult that
needs to
learn.

I have chuckled of fear going through my body, for in three days I will
be
one, I will be a year older and not knowing that I will have a year
more
responsibilities.

And when I become that 15 year old, I will hug you, and ask you
questions
that I have never asked you before.

I will try not to cry...but I know I will.

So I will run to my room and cry, and think of the good and the bad.

i will wonder why everyone I love, like, and want to be with leave me,
abandon me, and vanish and never say but a few words after to me.

And I will wonder how to change my life to become that person that
loves
more than their friends and family.

And I breathe.

For when I hold that breath all of those problems are in me, so I let
go,
and they're gone for another year to worry about them.

And at this point of time I have never felt more afraid.

And when you say I act immature and young for my age, and you tell
me to
grow up.

For when I do grow up, will you soon tell me I act too old for my age and
I
need to settle down?

For the reason that I act immature is that I don't want to grow up and
face
the fact that I have to be an adult, and take on the responsibilities that
you have to take.

For I see that you're struggling to survive and maybe not every day you
have
a smile, but I see that you are happy inside.

And I am afraid.

Sacramento Area Literary Calendar

July 2008

Tues, 7/1 7:30 pm and every Tuesday: SPC Poets' Workshop @ the Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 FREE bring 15 copies of your one page poem to be read/critiqued.

Every Tuesday 7 p.m. - "Life Sentence" poetry reading and open mic. The Coffee Garden, 2904 Franklin Blvd., Sac.
<http://www.myspace.com/lifesentenceshow>

Wed, 7/2 8pm Mahogany Poetry Series, and every Wed nite at Queen Sheba restaurant @ 1704 Broadway, with Khiry Malik M., Slam, open.

Wed, 7/2 The Bistro, 3rd and F Streets in Davis, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays. Free. 530.756.4556
aojones@ucdavis.edu
http://www.bistro33.com/bistro33_davis for schedule

Thurs, 7/3 and every Thurs 8pm, Open Mike and featured poet at Lunas Café -- Feature TBA

Sat., 7/5 and every 1st Sat- Rhythm N Rhymes: open mike, webcast & filmed for public TV @ Butch N Nellie's, near corner of 19th & I. myspace.com/RNRshow

Sat., 7/5 Galleria Posada open mike 1024 22nd St. in Spanish and English 916.456.5323
916.446.513346-1324 fax
www.larazagaleriaposada.org
larazagaleria@sbcglobal.net

Mon, 7/7 - 7:30 p.m. Asian Poetry Reading with Frances Kakugawa at SPC, at 25th and R. Asylum Art Gallery. Free. 916-979-9706.
<http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org>.

Tues, 7/8, 7:30 pm and every Tuesday: SPC Poets' Workshop @ Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 FREE bring 15 copies of your one page poem to be read/critiqued.

Friday 7/11, 7:00-9:00pm, Second Friday Poetry Reading at The Vox (gallery & cafe) 19th & X Street, Sacramento
Free & Family-Friendly
Featuring Brad Buchanan, Catherine Fraga, Stephen Sadler, Lisa Jones, Matt Veazey and Frank Graham. Hosted by Cynthia Linville.
Vegan meal beforehand 6:00 - 7:00 pm under \$10.
RSVP for the meal

Monday 7/14, 7:30 pm—
Ali Salim reads at SPC HQ 1719 25th St.

Tues, 7/15, 7:30 pm and every Tuesday: SPC Poets' Workshop @ Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 FREE 15 copies of your one page poem.

Friday, 7/18, 7:30pm, Sacramento Poetry Contest Winners will give a reading at SPC, at 25th and R .

Monday, 7/21, 7:30 pm
Yang Her will be reading poems from her new book Paint Life With Colors of The World at SPC, at 25th and R. The event will also be a benefit for My Sister's House www.my-sisters-house.org.

Thursday, 7/24, 8:00 pm,
Poetry Unplugged at Lunas 1414 16th St. SAC
Featuring: Monika Rose,
Phillip T. Nails

Sunday, 7/27, 11am-1pm
El Camino Poets meet to workshop poems. All poets are welcome bring 10 copies of your 1 page poem for critique. At the Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts.

Mon, 7/28, 7:30-- Susan Palwick and Ellen Klages Will be reading at the SPC at 1719 25th st.

Tues, 7/29, 7:30 pm and every Tuesday: SPC Poets' Workshop @ Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 bring 15 copies of your one page poem to be read/critiqued. FREE



Notes on Primitive Narrative

Tim Kahl

Materials and methods: Among the Inuit there is a tale of a youth who is carried away by the drifting ice. After a few days adrift, he finally reached land. Afterwards he composed a song that mocked his hardship and misfortune which became popular in all the villages.

Aya, I am joyful; this is good!
Aya, there is nothing but ice around me. That is good!
Aya, I am joyful; this is good!
My country is nothing but slush, that is good!
Aya, I am joyful; this is good!
Aya, when, indeed, will this end? this is good!
I am tired of watching and waking, this is good!

Here the word *aya* is composed of meaningless vocables. They are often found at the beginning of a refrain and mirror the function of the “la la” or “doo wop” in popular song. They carry a song along and provide rhythmical structure. However sometimes these “nonsense” words (nonsensical only in that they do not have a thing in the world as referent) do also carry an emotional weight, such as with the tribes of the Kwakiutl where the syllables may refer to any number of supernatural beings, for example, *ham ham*, the cannibal spirit, *hei hei*, the grizzly bear spirit.

Ham ham, He-who-carries-corpses-to-be-his-food, ham ham.

In the Hamatsa ritual the cannibal spirit is responsible for kidnapping a youth who returns to the village as a wild man-eater. The capture of the youth is followed by song and dance that mark his ritual purification.

For Franz Boas these cried vocables/words may be similar to the origins of speech. Much like the cries of animals which are initially emotional and then become referential later on, these vocables/words suggest a spontaneous emotional cry which precedes the referential and then even much later the sentence with action.

The emotional content of a tribal poem, according to Boas, should not be measured by the emotional response by us, the modern counterparts, but by the emotional lives of the people they were intended for. Indeed, it may be difficult to understand the emotional value tied to hunger, which is not a common experience for modern man, who has not had to fathom the implications of starvation. Therefore, the joy of the hunt or the gathering of fruit described in a tribal poem has a much more charged, emotional feel than just being denotative. Unless, that is, one takes great joy and breaks into song while marching the cart down the baking goods aisle.

Projects out in the field: So let’s recap. We have witnessed a song that mocked an individual’s hardship, nonsense syllables that invoke a supernatural being, and the latent emotion in a poem about gathering food that might be lost on anyone who hasn’t recently ventured past the supermarket. How might these items map on to our contemporary experience? First, there is the element of loneliness and alienation from the Inuit poem, which is hardly a novelty for the modern man. Perhaps it is too familiar. However, mocking one’s self for feeling isolated is another. So one might ask where is it possible to experience isolation and, ironically, take one’s self to task for it. This might happen in a crowd, in any public space that temporarily abandoned, where one feels the presence of people who aren’t there. I find this feeling at Wal-Mart. All of those consumer items manufactured and handled by people all over the world whose handiwork is pressing down on me. I might shout out the nonsense of some brand name god, the supernatural force that brings sponge dart shooters [Nerf] or baby car seats [Graco] or doggie chew toys [Nylabone].

Nerf Nerf You-who-let-the-tot-shoot-up-the-bathroom-mirror Nerf Nerf
Nerf Nerf You-who-left-window-peppered-with-little-suction-circles Nerf Nerf
Nerf Nerf You-who-put-dart-nose-on-Dan-Rather-TV-screen-face Nerf Nerf

Imagine the exaltation at finally foraging through the aisles to at last come upon the Red Vines near the checkout! Mmmm Mmmm. Just invoking the name—Red Vines—affirms both guilt and delight.

Examples taken from Franz Boas’s *Primitive Art*

Two Poems by Arnal Kennedy

THE OMEN

Someday we will meet
When our obsessions
Have lost their power to hurt.

Perhaps it will be at
Central Park West and you
Would've found the tender mercies

Of a girl friend to take into your
Confidence who will understand
The sliding fortune of your

Point of view. I will stand there
After introductions and remember
Your promises that ruled my world.

Later, in my apartment I will pen
A word or two as if meeting were an omen
And your apology which requires a different grit.

HOW IT IS

A wife must be trained
That's all there is to it.
Especially on Sunday's
When you value your entertainment.
She may not understand
Your fascination with football
Her face screwed up
Like a contortionist.
She refers to it as sweaty men
In tights who run into each other
And fall down, and forget their
Homophobia of patting their
Teammates butt when something
Goes right. She wants to take
Our children to the Christmas
Parade, and can't you miss a game?
Yes I can but not this one.
Although your family means everything
The way a rudder is to a boat.
Today the grainy air will be mutual loathing.

Sacramento State Summer Writers' Conference

August 16 & 17th

Sacramento, CA--Registration is underway for Sacramento State's 4th Annual Sacramento State Summers Writers' Conference, August 16th & 17th, at the College of Continuing Education, Napa Hall. The conference is sponsored in full by the College of Continuing Education.

The conference features a keynote address from actress Dinah Lenney, author of *Bigger Than Life: A Murder, A Memoir*. This intensive weekend focuses on a variety of writing workshops for all levels of writers. Topics for 2008 cover the memoir, non-fiction, poetry, stage/screenwriting, publishing, writer's block, Blogging and more. The conference also includes individual critique meetings, luncheons, evening reading sessions (with dessert) and opportunities to form peer networking groups.

Writing Workshop presenters include Dinah Lenney, Catherine Stifter, Peter Grandbois, Jeff Knorr, Rick Foster, Jane Friedman, Linda Joy Singleton, Barbara Bitela and Judie Fertig-Panneton.

Registration costs are \$198.00.

Special Features: Participants can also pay an additional \$50 for a *One-on-One Writing Critique*, which consists of a 15-minute individual critique of work from a workshop leader, or pay \$35.00 for *Destination Whistle-stop with Agents and Editors*, which consists of a rotational 5 min seat time with two local agents and two local editors.

Registration is available at the conference website, www.cce.csus.edu/writersconference along with schedule and workshop presenter information. For information, call Amy Ruddell, 916-278-4822.

Inanna and Ereshkigal: A Love Story

Ann Wehrman

I.

We lie down together as one,
the two sides of myself, side by side,
we turn on one side, then the other,
searching for comfort, for Dumuzi.
Both sides know the same need—
one cleaves to a thin blade;
one yearns, waits, imagines,
remembers his eyes;
my sister, myself; my dark and light.

Watch through the window, the spring evening fair;
the Evening Star setting, we lie down;
snow-pure in spring, the Star
banishes fear, pinpoints infinity,
a tunnel, a road leading into blackness;
drawn, lifted from light sleep, I rise,
missing Dumuzi, wanting his deep embrace—
Ereshkigal, too, misses him.

Cold with fallen dew, I shiver;
stand in old sweats;
pull tightly around me a nightshirt of Dumuzi's;
gaze out the window upon the gleaming
white swath of light from the Star;
it glows, sheens, beckons,
grows larger, immeasurably bright—
pulls me out, or I climb out,
past the wooden sill, curtains I've washed thin,
into the drenched night air, crickets calling;
I step onto the road of light.

II.

Downward it sinks, yet into the Star,
the white light expands, then explodes
and finally, fades.
I find myself facing Ereshkigal,
who beckons, a wicked smile stretched,
her eyes bitter and empty—
Can I be this cynical;
can this shade be my reflection?
I reach out to hug her,
but silence reproaches, repudiates me;
she finally utters: "One piece at a time, Sister,
and don't think this doesn't turn me on."
She knows, as do I, the cellulite,
the pendulous, middle-aged breasts and full stomach;
still, licks her lips, looks me up and down.
I peel off the sweat pants,
ten years old, stretched out in the waist,
hand them towards her;
silent and stern, she points to a gate.

My pants draped over the gate, I trudge
behind Ereshkigal, her body swaying,
tight in jeans and boots, jersey tank, hair up in a bun.
She stops again before a fence's open wire gate,
looks at me, smirks.
"Where is Dumuzi?" I cry;
my sister sticks her angry face in mine,
"Take it off, tramp!"
I strip off my panties, and leave them at the gate.

We walk on in my dream of hell;
I wonder why this is taking so long,
can't we just have a cup of coffee together?
And where is Dumuzi,
my lover, my man?

My sister, my other, myself,
turns and demands more,
all that I am, relentlessly:
I have no recourse.
I surrender Dumuzi's shirt,
remembering it covering his sensitive, gleaming flesh,
the light brown hair feathering his chest.
I lay it at her feet, at the gate of her soul;
she laughs in delight,
then like lightning reaches behind me, grips my dark hair,
and hangs me by a knot of it on a long, iron hook,
and I swing, tearing my scalp, screaming,
and the stars pop and fizzle around me,
darkness swirls,
and I lose consciousness.

III.

Waking some later, much or little I know not,
I see myself receding, free somehow,
slipping, flying up the white way,
and then I see Dumuzi, falling back away from me,
face resolute, moustache straight over red lips, closed and
set,
hands tied before him
and Ereshkigal by his side, laughing,
taking him into her embrace.

I drop off the milky road,
fall with a thud into my empty room,
onto the worn rug over the hard floor;
eyes open or closed, I can only imagine
their coupling, yet she is myself—so then why
do I not share this embrace?

I dream that they fight, work, make love
as the summer months pass,
months of long rain here in the East.
I feel nothing night after night
but sweat, tears, and my own bitter comfort,
as lightening bugs, mournful doves,
and mockingbirds keep me company.

IV.

At my window, autumn's moon swells
through the night.
The air feels warmer now on my skin,
my light cotton blouse
can't replace Dumuzi's shirt, but suffices,
and I gaze out the window,
stroke my arms under the blouse.
Sleep won't be courted tonight,
and finally the Morning Star glows faint, then
stronger,
still bright and clear before sun's warmth
outshines her;
I realize it is once again morning.
I turn to make coffee—I should have slept—
and in half sleep, I step into Dumuzi's
embrace.
His shade it is not.
His arms surround me;
his beard full now, months grown, tickles my
wet cheek;
beaten and cut, but victorious, he leans in
and catches my mouth—

in his kiss I am renewed.

Ann Wehrman earned her MA in English/Creative Writing in 2005 at Sac State, and is currently working to complete her second BA in Music/Flute, also at Sac State. She has published poetry in college literary journals (both at Humboldt State University and Sac State), the Sac State Bazzanella Competition awards booklet, The Mountain Astrologer, Rattlesnake Review, Poetry Now, and Medusa's Kitchen (online). In December 2007, Rattlesnake Press published a small collection of Ann's poetry in a broadside that can be found for free at The Book Collector in Sacramento, or by mail through Rattlesnake Press. She has recently begun teaching English at American River College.

Kristina Marie Darling *reviews* *This Big Fake World: A Story in Verse*

by Ada Limon

Chosen by Frank X. Gaspar as winner of the 2005 Pearl Poetry Prize, Ada Limon's *This Big Fake World* explores a nameless protagonist's rediscovery of romance after his failed marriage, a story that takes the form of an extended poem sequence. Gleaning aspects multiple genres, Limon's work offers readers the subplots, characters, and dialogue of literary fiction while invoking a full range of poetic forms, a combination that remains striking in its coherence as a book-length project. Narrating individual poems from different points of view, Limon's work proves reminiscent of Edgar Lee Master's *The Spoon River Anthology*, Dave Etter's *Alliance, Illinois*, and James Tate's *Memoir of the Hawk*, all of which create their own compelling fictional worlds through character sketches in verse.

When conveying her many characters' voices and personalities, Limon's formal range proves one of the strong points of her collection. Using prose, tercets, numbered lists, and epistles, Limon invokes a variety of narrative approaches while maintaining a sense of stylistic unity throughout. Often using form to illuminate content, Limon's templates frequently mirror and further elucidate the situations being described. Her poem "Our Hero Receives Instructions in a Dream" exemplifies this trend. Limon writes, for example:

1.
She lives where the same street intersects
itself so that you cannot take No for an answer.

2.
You must keep down that road of hers,
but try to make yourself small in it,
your head becoming very small there.

Using the detached form of a list to communicate the protagonist's love for an acquaintance, Limon creates discontinuity between the content of the poem and the template that she chooses. Suggesting the protagonist wishes for a clear-cut, empirical solution to a more metaphysical dilemma, Limon uses poetic form as a means by which to comment on plot. This poem, like many of the works in Limon's collection, suggests new possibilities for poetic technique through this hybrid approach, an undertaking that proves entertaining as well as thought-provoking.

Although novel in her use of form, Limon's poems often function best within the context of the entire manuscript, proving weaker as individual pieces than as a whole. Often, singular works from *This Big Fake World* illuminate one another, a quality that bodes well for the book but detracts from the poem itself. "His One Act of Vandalism Goes Almost Unnoticed" remains a prime example of this trend in Limon's work. She writes, for instance:

Wearing his shirt over his head, which made it hard to see save the buttonholes, he scratched the word HARDLY above the hardware store sign. It was his first act of vandalism. He thinks of himself as a hero of sorts, imagines a large hammer sewn on his chest in sequins. Red tights, nails around his superhero tool belt...He is desperately upset that he was not caught. (22)

While the piece entertains on its own, other poems in the book, which depict the clerk who works at the hardware store and the protagonist's love for her, imbue "His One Act of Vandalism Goes Almost Unnoticed" with additional significance that does not come across in the piece itself. Nevertheless, Limon's work entertains while experimenting, a quality one rarely encounters in contemporary poetry. A hybrid of form and genre that, for the most part, succeeds wonderfully, *This Big Fake World* introduces new possibilities for literary technique, inviting readers and writers alike to expand their definition of poetry.

Kristina Marie Darling is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis. She is the author of five chapbooks of poetry and nonfiction, which include Fevers and Clocks (March Street Press, 2006) and The Traffic in Women (Dancing Girl Press, 2006). A Pushcart Prize nominee in 2006, her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Janus Head, Rattle, The Mid-America Poetry Review, Rain Taxi, The Adirondack Review, The Main Street Rag, Big City Lit, CutBank, The Mid-American Review, Jacket, Redactions: Poetry and Poetics, and other journals. Recent awards include residencies from the Centrum Foundation and the Mary Anderson Center for the Arts.

Among Summer Pines *by* Quinton Duval

I start with “Morning Tea”, the last poem in the collection. Its transformative message triggers memories of many years of tea consumption, but the poem, which is not just about tea, transports the reader on a journey into the poet’s imagination, and “we are [now] heading toward somewhere / with a view”, a “little town” that could be anywhere on earth. That’s the power of Quinton Duval’s poetry: one tiny detail will lead to great artistic heights as we remember with the persona, predict the future, ponder about departed friends, and imagine our own departures, always aware of the poet’s and our passion for life.

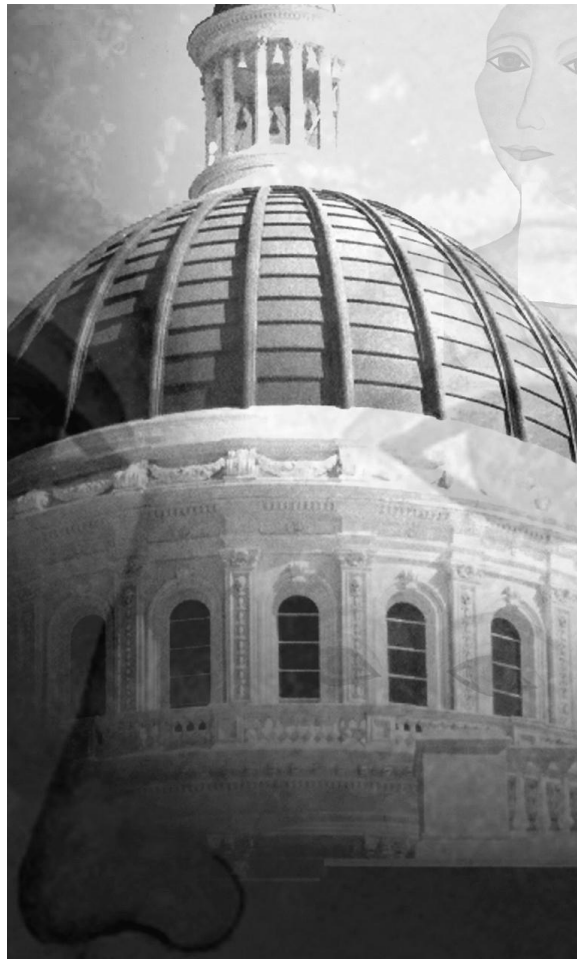
The persona in “Man Driving” is taking us on a drive down a road he likes, “a real road”, tree-lined and with stretches of farmland on either side. The driving is peaceful as the man savors the view of “alfalfa new-mown/or rows of sugar beets/safflower massed together.” The reader experiences this drive, hoping it will last forever to see the other bursts of life the driver will see, but there is an end to everything; even this road has a limit, “a place / where it will turn away.” Either that, or soon dusk will set in, and the view will dim. As we go through life, whether we observe every detail around us or not, time progresses. But these details can be revealing even for “this wide-open / unsteady, driving man.” The little we glean in the simple act of observing confirms how much we don’t know, yet opens that curiosity which makes poems like “Man Driving” possible. This collection speaks to Duval’s facility with language and his sharp imagination: “I, professore, drink my coffee / Or sweet wine, copy it all down / In my worn-out book of psalms”. The readers are invited to “live a simple life among summer pines” where the thick syrup of life culminates from the simplest details. In these well-crafted gems, no word wasted and each image contributes to the deep layers of meaning. The richness of life or its emptiness even, is celebrated through a musicality of language no reader can ignore.

autumn morning

Ann Wehrman

tops white as Indonesian pearl
blending to gray undersides,
above me, clouds sail in slow motion,
nowhere to go

pristine after last night’s rains,
light breeze caresses my breast
heaven gently drapes its string of pearls



A Capitol Collage -- Jennifer Pickering

Poem on Saturday

Forrest Ambruster

My dryad, my naiad, we are dyed dyad and tied To peek from old windows tinted green from inside But the glass in our heads was already so curved, We saw not till we merged, and embraced, burned and purred Enough mangled poetry, I praise what I see In the words some great bell forced once more on to me

Blue Child, with eyes beneath a dreamscape's dark ground, Saint of the Seabirds, holy, wings so long found, sing and come down, light pillow down Wanderer's soul asleep in soft hay, long lost sweet hay, where my darling once lay Open your eyes, and summer night reigns, forget-me-not pains, for purples lick gray, and dark souls burn away, A fire at night in summer fields where you lay Brown hair shows me life, like a farmer's cornsilk To starved pilgrims with eyes, eyes bright as milk, Who sailed from fair coast, who sailed without boast, to taste one maize ear, just one ear I bring close Wild wisherwoman, Kiss-her-woman, Lotus root in the mud

Goat-children dance while the cattle chew cud, and their mothers chew clover, and their fathers alone, see the milk in their bones, Scarlet shining from your lips and your pores Pleading for love like the cry of a whore I cannot refuse, though you would refuse me I must have soil in which to plant my first seeds The seeds you requested, fruit from afar (Watermelon, pears bigger than beds, where you sleep in your socks, stuck by black longings like tar, Blackberries wet as golden carp heads, Citrus sharp as a madman's lust-driven knocks, and they are all also Worthless)

Because you are the Goddess of Mares on a rain-shook plain
The lover of men when you like whiskered games
The light of the world that makes all men lame
A teller of tales who makes men's tales the same

the third chapter...

Corey Simpson

so here I lay lost in sadness.....
with never ending hopes of gladness.....
I feel like I'm walking on a world that no longer exists....
I bet if I wrote me feeling down ..it would be a never ending list
so here it is ..my third chapter ..to a story without an ending ...
you would cry too if you could understand the message I am sending ...
for the tears have come and I fear that they are not going away...
because I will feel that pain every other day ...
because the story isn't over and I know that now....
and I wish I could cure myself if I knew how....
this story is unexpected and confusing ...
do you think there will be another sole on the path that I am choosing..
or is there only room for one on that path to descend
to a place where there is never an end

He Finally Stops

Joseph Pratt

He staggers up the drive way damn near slamming in to the door jumbling his
bottle and his keys he unlocks the door,

The sound of the door unlocking makes her flinch, She runs over to him with
no hesitation and goes over to him and gives him a kiss on the cheek, As
she backed away he grabbed her by the hair and forces their mouths to kiss
he exchanging the foul taste of liquor and throws her to the wood floor, as
he took a big drink of his half empty Jack Daniels...

Stop,Stop,Stop STOP,no no no no no no...

Tears of pain and love falls from her blackened eye As she screams and
muffled by his hand over her mouth he chokes her and punches her like she
was a grown man, She struggles to get away but he drags her back

STOP STOP STOOOOOOOOP!!!!

He lets her go smiles, and licks his lips, she scrambles and runs to the
kitchen and quickly grabs a knife and grips it tight, as he finishes his
bottle of Jack's, he walks closer to her, he throws the empty bottle against
the kitchen wall. As he took a step closer.....EVERY THINGS PAUSES HE DROPS
TO HIS KNEES. Garbled words flow, blood flows from his throat on to his
company shirt and over his pen that reads "WOMANS SHELTER..WE WILL PROTECT
YOU"

her hand trembles, he gargles for air continue the hands he once used to
beat her falls limp, and he topples over, she rubs the developing child
within her...as she whispers quietly "HE FINALLY STOPPED BABY,HE FINALLY
STOPPED ?.."

Deity

Alexander Banuelos

Deity comes home late
the lovely, tired little drunk
hair let loose and curling at the ends.
In the darkness of the living room,
and in her stocking feet,
she tip toes to the couch
with exaggerated sneaking?
knees lifting almost to her chest
and arms outstretched like airplane wings? to pass out limp and dreaming in her dress.

She does not see me in the doorway
a shadow leaning heavy on the frame,
the hollows of my eyes gone blue
a dozen years ago.

My vanity and my good looks
had the decency to leave together.
There is some mercy, after all, in our design:
a soft amnesia to the frequently mistreated, an adrenaline flare to the
cornered and outnumbered, a flash of white light to the very nearly dead.

If I could sweep together all my scraps of time:
the leap years in my arms
and the hours lost in airplanes
flying east against the turning world,
I'd stitch them front to end
and weave a garland
like water lily crown,
lay it wet and heavy
on Deity's spinning head of sun bleached hair.


Her even sleeping sounds
bounce lightly off the walls and floor
compounding ad infinitum
in the echo chamber of our home.

She is indifferent company,
a member of the privileged caste
exempt from housework,
boredom,
and the sticky paper of intimate associations.

Still, I can't resist the waif
flushed pink, and posed
exactly as she fell.

She is time-sick,
drunk and lovely.
I am just an incidental:
the kindly aging organism
that puts her down to bed.

www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org	July 2008
	sacramento's literary calendar & review
	<p>poetrynow</p>
A PUBLICATION OF THE SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER	
<div data-bbox="581 346 1339 743">  </div> <div data-bbox="1360 149 1484 997"> <p>Mon, 7.07.08; 7:30pm @ SPC HQ, 1719 25th in SAC, Asian Forms of Poetry Reading, with Frances Kakugawa, the poet named "Go", and other Asian and Asian form poets.</p> </div>	

<p>poetrynow</p> <p>The Poet Tree, Inc. 1719 25th Street Sacramento, CA 95816</p>	<p>spc blog: www.sacramentopoetrycenter.blogspot.com</p>
<p>SPC Readings ● Mondays, 7:30PM</p> <p><u>JULY 7TH</u> FRANCES KAKUGAWA</p> <p><u>JULY 14TH</u> ALI SALIM</p> <p><u>JULY 21ST</u> YANG HER</p> <p><u>JULY 28TH</u> SUSAN PALWICK & ELLEN KLAGES</p>	<p>Every Tuesday: SPC POETRY WORKSHOP 7:30 PM, Hart Senior Center, 27th & J ● Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem</p> <div data-bbox="771 1486 1528 1934">  </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>