



“RELAX / I TELL THEM / YOU’RE INSIDE / POETRY NOW” - JULIA CONNOR

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poetrynow | sacramento's literary calendar & review



*The Poet Tree, Inc.
1719 25th Street
Sacramento, CA 95816*

SPC READINGS
MONDAYS, 7:30PM

EVERY TUESDAY:
SPC Poetry Workshop
7:30 PM, Hart Senior
Center, 27th & J Bring
15-20 copies of your
one-page poem

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Please submit events to be listed on the calendar to aarondscrub@yahoo.com 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)

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CORRECTED REPRINT OF FIRST PLACE WINNER

DIAGNOSIS
By 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 an envelope,
small enough to fit inside a fortune cookie,
shrinking down to one line,
to one word:
breathe.

SACRAMENTO AREA LITERARY EVENTS - OCTOBER 2008

WED, 10/1, 8pm Mahogany Poetry Series, and every Wed night at Queen Sheba restaurant @ 1704 Broadway, with Khiry Malik M., Slam, open.

WED, 10/1, 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, 10/2 and every Thurs 8pm, Open Mike and featured poet at Lunas Café -- Feature TBA

SAT, 10/4 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

TUES, 10/7, 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, 10/8, 7:30 PM Rattlesnake Press will release a new rattlechap from MOIRA MAGNESON (He Drank Because) and a littlesnake broadside from HATCH GRAHAM (Circling of the Pack) Refreshments and a read-around will follow; bring your own poems or somebody else’s. Info: kathykieth@hotmail.com/. The Book Collector, 1008 24th St.,Sacramento

FRI, 10/10, 7:00pm Second Friday Poetry Reading at The Vox (gallery & cafe) 19th & X Street, Sacramento. Free & Family-Friendly Featuring Kathy Keith, James DenBoer, Andy Jones & more. Hosted by Cynthia Linville.

SAT, 10/11 10-11:30, SPC 2nd and 4th Saturday workshop facilitated by Emmanuel Sigauke and Frank Dixon Graham located at South Natomas Community Center next door to South Natomas Library 2921 Truxel Road, Sacramento, CA. Bring 10 copies of your one page poem. contact or for info: grahampoet@aol.com

FRI, 10/17, 7:30, The Other Voice presents Ray Coppock and Deborah Thomas. Refreshments and open mike follow. UU Church of Davis library.

SUN, 10/26, 11am, El Camino Poets meet at the Ethel Hart Senior Center @ 27th and J streets for a poetry workshop. Bring 8 copies of your poems for critique. All poets welcome

THURSDAY, OCT. 30, 8 PM, Rattlesnake Press will hold a reading at Luna’s Cafe to release two SpiralChaps to honor and celebrate Luna’s, including a new collection of art and poetry from B.L. KENNEDY (Luna’s House of Words); and an anthology of Luna’s poets, artists and photographs (La Luna: Poetry Unplugged at Luna’s Café) edited by FRANK ANDRICK. Luna’s Café, 1414 16th St., Sacramento. Info: kathykieth@hotmail.com/.

HALLOWEEN POETRY BASH -- OCTOBER 31, 2008, begins at 7pm at the SPC HQ 1719 25th St., Sacramento with Poet and UC Davis Professor Joe Wenderoth

Mary Herrema Giudice is a graduate student in literature at Cal State Sacramento. She lives in Davis with her inimitable husband Ben.
THIRD PLACE WINNER

IN THE DARK CORRIDORS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
By Mary Herrema Giudice

The air in our kitchen changes along with the fog,
as if the suitcases are being hauled out from under bed,
as if underwear and T-shirts are being folded in neat squares
with only the toothbrush left for morning.

You pour the coffee, while the cat and I watch
with wavering, waiting eyes. We remember
this feeling of change—it comes before a long loneliness.
When the last swampy inch has cooled in our grizzly-bear mugs, you begin.

Only speculation: Idaho, Montana, six months
(months the cat and I should be home writing our thesis,
warming the hearth.) It's not for sure—but those places
are prime for research, and you've been thinking for months...

Cold, stunned, I who love aloneness as life itself say,
“I didn't marry you so that I could live alone.”
As an attentive wife, I know damn well that the fly-fishing is prime
in those places, so I say that too.

The cat sharpens her claws on the suitcase,
curling and wallowing in the smells inside.
Soon I know the joy-swell of something I have never made—
love, with someone who will be gone when I awake.

BOOK REVIEW

GOOD MORNIN' GLORY
By Terry a O'Neal
Reviewed by Emmanuel Sigauke.

When you open this collection, you will see three epigraphs, but the one I like best is by Ella Wheeler Wilcox: “With every deed you are sowing a seed, though the harvest you may not see,” which complements an earlier one: “Sow the seed.” With these initial messages, this collection by a Sacramento poet often compared to Maya Angelou promises hope and renewal.

The first poem, entitled “my sister” is a call for universal unity, with the understanding that all humans are the same, and that unity is not optional: “My sister— / let me love you / grab hold of my hand.” Then, the persona advises the reader: “love your sister as you love yourself— / every shade— white, beige, brown, orange or black.” Common sense, right? It would be, if it wasn't for our reluctance to live as one species.20As hesitant brothers and sisters, we forget about kindness, “caught up in ...this ‘state of confusion’”.

In “Mama Afrika”, O'Neal's message connects with that of South Africa's Brenda Fassie, who sung about the continent as a caring mother. O'Neal reaches out to Africa in her persona's search for identity. Perhaps, a strong sense of identity compliments the need for universal unity that the poet called for earlier? Of course, just knowing where we belong or who we are is not enough, but knowing that we are

connected to everything around us, the cypress trees, dirt and gravel is: “the essence of me.../ [is] in the dust before me.”

The title poem, “Good Mornin' Glory” sparkles with the promise of a new day and conveys a message of constant renewal, something akin to the organic regeneration of flora and fauna. There is beauty in this regenerative power that's at once physical and spiritual, cyclical and permanent.

In “lavender sky” the persona states inhales “the aroma / of the season”. In “hair” the glory the persona sees is in the connection with African heritage, “the beauty and grace” she embraces.

Some of the poems celebrate womanhood in general and black motherhood, in particular. I like the one entitled ... “and the beat goes on”, in which the persona lauds “this black woman / this Queen / my mother, my sister / my aunty, my grandmother / my teacher” whose guidance she seeks everyday.

These poems call on us to hold hands in unity and in our search for the history's guidance. This appreciation of each other will bring the most natural and desirable qualities in us, sowing the seeds for an understanding of our mysterious, yet glorious universe.

Cynthia Linville currently teaches in the English department at California State University, Sacramento and hosts Second Friday Poetry Reading at The Vox. Her poetry has recently appeared in The Sacramento News and Review, Medusa’s Kitchen, and Rattlesnake Review.

GREAT-GRANDFATHER

For Leslie Lee Atwood (d. Sept. 4, 1972)

By Cynthia Linville

In my favorite picture you are barefoot
milking a cow in Mississippi
squat on the ground
with a hand-rolled hanging out the side of your mouth
gazing off into the distance –
California –
where I loved to sit on your lap
and eat the peanuts you shelled for me,
loved your pleas to
“Come give me some sugar”
your voice as scratchy as your whiskers.
My mother spent every summer with you
back on the farm
where rich black soil clung to her shoes
and the nights were so dark
she was afraid she’d gone blind.
You were up an hoeing the rows before dawn
home for a collard-green and fat-back supper
a short nap
then out all night
hunting possum and raccoon for skins.
Summers, the whole family picked cotton for a neighbor
(bent backs and pricked fingers)
for 50c a sack.
Such life was a mystery to me
as were the butter churn and solid-metal clothes irons
that rested on your California hearth
after years of hard labor.
Years after you were dead and I was full-grown
I visited the old family farm.
Your old house is still there
collapsed in upon itself
in a heap of weathered boards,
rusted appliances, and sweat-like rain.
Mississippi is a different country now.

Lisa Jones recently received first place for the Constance Topping Memorial Prize for poetry. She writes about ideas, relationships and moments of awakening, and her poetry is influenced by Buddhism, feminism and sociology.

LEAVES

By Lisa Jones

Elegant fans of ginkgo trees spill thick
over the sidewalk and into the street.

Each day of leaving, throwing down their rich
yellow; and the pear, a sear of scarlet.

I remind myself they won’t be gone long.
But how they tease us.

Most beautiful when they are
leaving us.

Or think of the flash of color as a deep
opening.

Like a man’s poem.

A man who opens for no one, very long.
Except briefly, sweetly here.

Or not a poem, but your grey-haired father,
his voice breaking strangely.

So much held back,
given, taken back.

Strung out on the practice of misery, they came
to that unturned soil. Starving and exhausted
men, they came. Scant skeletons ravaged
with disease, sunburnt and raw they came;
to labor and die, break trail, build churches,
leave bones, plant crops, tame land; and then,
pass into oblivion. Die unknown, they did,
unnamed they came, these first explorers
to cross that long cruel sand - the first
of the Baja field hands, these Cochimí Indian.
And does anyone know or ask why? &what

carried them so far from home? What document,
save death, might serve to carry them back again?
when all too swiftly their terrible job was done,
all too soon the tribes they taught displaced them,
and in turn were displaced and then succumbed
as disease and cruelty would take their toll
they, too, learned the modern ways of misery,
until they could self-inflict with amazing skill.
What that didn’t get, the soldiers would kill,
if not with guns, then syphilis.

Between the Spaniards and the Yankees it took less
than a century to reduce twelve-thousand years
and a hundred and thirty-thousand people to a handful
of tears and a little dust. Oh, by then, they were
allowed their ration of the grape. They’d be paid
in aguardiente at the end of the week, drank
and fought till Sunday; arrested, corralled
and auctioned Monday morning; cheap labor...
dirt cheap the Angelino growers would say,
and kept it up until the checkerboard was
just about complete; and, yes, how the money flowed.

As eloquent as he was, John Muir said nothing
that ought endure as much as, in that very year,
Stephen Powers said in his government report:
“Never before in history has a people been
swept away with such terrible swiftness.”

Martin Luther King didn’t say that.
J.F.K didn’t say that.
Neither did Abraham Lincoln.

That was 1877, the same year John Muir
entered the valley of San Gabriel, when Dr. Conger
said to Muir, “Milk and honey and plenty of money.”

*Related works from “California Scenario” can be found at http://home.comcast.net/~redslider/Noguchi/entry/scenario/cas_cover.htm;
other works by Red slider can be viewed at http://home.comcast.net/~redslider/Main_Lobby.htm*

Susan Wolbarst writes in Davis, where she lives with her husband and teenaged son. A native of New Hampshire, her background includes community journalism, video production, and advertising.

BLACK WIDOW

By Susan Wolbarst

Spectacularly long
stiletto legs
silhouetted on the wall,
so intensely black
she makes me rethink blackness.

She makes no bones about her dark aspect,
but she has issues with the “widow” thing.
I want to believe her when
she says stories of killing her mate
after sex
are overblown, unfair,
bright gossip of the kind
so often spread by the jealous
about the seductive.

I approach her, jar in nervous hand
not wanting to feel those fangs
with the lovely-sounding name:
chelicerae,
yet daring to hope
for a tiny peek at her
well-concealed red lace panties.

SKIPPING STONES ACROSS A RIVER
By Ray Hadley

First they were skipping stones
then began throwing them at each other.

It was that kind of fight,
each side pushing the envelope.

There was a big nest up in a tree,
birds coming and going, feeding their young.

A strange coincidence, the young birds
were attempting to make their first flight
and began crash-landing near the boys’ feet.

They stopped fighting long enough
to help, lifting a few above their heads to give
them a second chance.

“Don’t touch them,” one yelled. “If the mother
gets your scent she won’t take them back.”

The boys picked them up anyway.
This time they got it, flying around their heads
like mad and in circles around each other.

The boys went back to their rocks.
This time skipping the stones six, eight,
twelve times across the river.

“Don’t worry,”
one said. “It was their time to fly.”

SPIRIT OF THE GROUND
By Red Slider

“Spirit of the Ground” is taken from the “California
Scenario” section of Red Slider’s Noguchi - The Man Who
Entered Stone

Out of the South they came, from the missions
of Baja, these Cochimí came. And some suppose
it was because that was where the padres led.
The church was long on desire, but short on ways,
and so, to a handful of mission Indian they owed
their passage from San Borja and Loreto -
the short end of the Baja road - through unknown
wilderness and to any reason they stayed alive .
And why, to consider the means, should we remark
that anything less flowed through Cochimí veins
than the passion and vision of a Cabrillo
or De Anza or Lewis & Clark?

Why else would they agree to take a single step
into those uncertain deserts better left alone?
To string some fragile strand of mission beads?
-- We do not believe the Orders of Assisi
held much sway beyond the padres, and they,
well, they drank their own wine deeply, --
more than that we best leave for believers
to explain.

Whatever the case, it was a fragile
human rosary, to be sure. Two out of three
never made it over those miles of devil rock
and bare desert boil. Just a handful, twenty-eight,
would arrive to consecrate that empty land
-- the first bead in the Junipero Serra strand.

To Mission San Diego Alacala they came, these
Baha field hands; these combo sappers, wagoners,
healers, hunters, mappers and pallbearers all-in-one;
these explorers and teachers we’ll simply call
the first braceros, the Baja field hands who broke
the earth to clod, and clod to soil; baked in the sun,
and toiled to death. But why? &what

kind of home was the home of a mission
breed, who neither sat at the padres’ table nor
could ever return to his own lodge over stones
long uprooted from the clay of soils older
than the church itself? What home did they
desert? what lands unguessed had they imagined?

*Merle Martin is Editor-in-Chief of the Re-
model Spokane magazine. He has published
numerous pieces of poetry, several of which
have appeared in Poetry Now.*

LIFE: A BALLET
By Merle Martin

OVERTURE: Valse Lento
When I become drowsy,
my mind becomes an ocean,
knitting clouds and water to
the same gray truth.

ACT I: Pas Marche
At thirteen, I had an epiphany:
other people make mistakes.
At seventeen, I had an epiphany:
everyone makes mistakes.
Insight is rehearsed drenchings.

ACT II: Cabriole Allegro
The reedy Grecian grins
through age twisted lips,
“It is not fish you fail to catch,
but those so patiently snatched
that sate our hungry tears.
It is weary to be wise.”

ACT III: Pas de Deux
Love is a splendid accident.
Lives drift together at some
point in space and time to
cling to a buoy of hope.
Thirst for wines of rapture
even for an ever instant.

ACT IV: Pas de Bourree
When I run out of quagmires
into which to tumble,
I’ll rehearse my death
until it’s nearly perfect,
poignant but dignified,
my spirit reciting poetry as
they strew my ashes to sea.

CODA: Le Grand Defile
When darkness finds
and moons remind,
I become an ocean.

*Nancy Wahl’s previous awards include the Bazzanella, Literature Alive, Tiger’s Eye,
and New Millennium. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, has appeared in
the Sacramento Anthology: One Hundred Poems and a Poet’s Corner Press Anthol-
ogy, and is the author of two chapbooks.*

WHAT THINGS THERE ARE I CANNOT SEE
By Nancy Wahl

Yellow ribbons of sunlight flap through the window,
lie across my friend’s bed and make him even paler,
white as his sterile hospital room.
Because he’s afraid, we talk about angels.

Later I stop in the lobby to look at a lithograph.
I don’t know the artist, but I like how he captures
just the right amount of refracted light
to create the illusion that I can reach up
and pluck right out of the clear vase
the one single long-stemmed Red Valerians.

I’ve been planning to do some serious reading
so I head out for the park
taking with me Abbott’s Flatland
and my paperback of non-Euclidian geometry.
I’m trying to explain Isaac.

It is usually the same people that come here each day,
sitting around the tables reading the paper.
The white azaleas are in massive bloom showing
only edges of shrubbery. They look like reflections
of puffy spring clouds on green waters.

I look for Isaac. He comes here often,
but no one pays much attention to him.
It’s as if people don’t see him.

He appears from out of nowhere, wandering,
sometimes pinching off a dead bloom, or picking up
scraps of paper. He wears a ratty old hat.

He’s called Isaac because someone remembered
the legend about a man called Isaac condemned
to wander the earth doing good deeds.

When Mrs. Llorente had to put down her Bichon Frise,
someone left a small wreath of pink wild roses
on her doorstep. Was it Isaac?

VIOLIN PRACTICE

By Sally Wood

Foot stomping, ponytail swinging,
schoolgirl body indignant,
she takes me on.
“You were four minutes late fixing breakfast.
It’s not fair!
I don’t have to practice until seven thirty FOUR.”
She folds her arms,
tosses her head,
gauges my reaction from the corner
of her eye.

Oh my small sweetness,
I am grateful for the chance
to be your mommy.
You’re so alive, so confident,
so innocent in your protestations.
You have your aunt’s dimples,
your father’s eyes, my hair,
your own mind and emotions.

I love your strong young self,
your enthusiasm for the ordered world of
spelling words, birthday parties,
intense and fleeting best friendships,
bedtimes, new bikes and
dreams of what you will be
“when you grow up.”
Your clear-eyed vision
of right and wrong
gives me solace, even though
it no longer fits
my aged and bumpy soul.

Catching the glimmer beneath the lashes,
I walk severely to her and
kiss the top of her head.
“Practice beings,”
I state in parental voice,
“at 7:30 a.m.”

Renee Marie is a speech-language pathologist and Army Medical Service Corps officer on voluntary Mobilization to Sacramento from the Vermont National Guard to support our wounded Warriors In Transition.

CRY BABY

By Renee Marie

On the Border Patrol mission I stole a piece
of rusty barbed wire from God’s desert.
115 degrees, Yuma, Arizona,
one quarter-mile south of my Army shade tent where
the new Wall is being built.
Self-determination requires maps drawn in blood, Pesos,
Dollars, risk and evasion.

from this rusted, twisted metal; chants
a heart song. I couldn’t just leave it there –
their history – without even a grave. So I
squeeze tight and bleed and listen and rewrite
the World Pledge to include
Everyone.

Nearly every time I hear or say
the Pledge of Allegiance;
my heart expands and contracts. And
feeling this vacuum I yield
to tears breaking free and
the Earth Flag waves in all the other
colors,
languages,
hopes.

Some say I’m too sensitive to
be an Army Officer;
too honest,
too expansive,
too idealistic;
a “Cry Baby,” because I tear-up for pledges of allegiance
imagining global
dignity; no vengeance, peace; no privilege. And I want so much
to wear this two-inch barbed wire around my neck,
with my Dog Tags, but I’ll get cut or tetanus and damage
“Government Property.”

Marilyn Wallner finds poetry workshops and creative writing classes life-enhancing and exhilarating as she nears 80 years old. Her poem “Free Fall” was also selected for publication in the 2008 American River College Review.

FREE FALL

By Marilyn Wallner

When our neighbor’s son
committed suicide,
he jumped from an overpass
in Orland onto
the interstate.
He’d left his refrigerated truck
loaded with free-range
chicken eggs from Ripon
idling on a turnout.
In the obituary
his benumbed parents
reassured the reader
that no one was injured
in the fall.

IMPRINT

By H. Allen Blair

Afternoon framed in an Okinawan window,
in a sun-suffused room.
Stripped to vulnerable essentials,
she sat me upon her bed,
slipped spraddle-legged upon my lap,
said it was a wonder flowers and trees
survived the harsh
ways of the world, and afterward,
told me to be careful,
as if she was a seer, a memory
not to be erased.