



poetry now

The Sacramento Poetry Center's Monthly Newsletter Journal for poetry

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

President's Message – January 2009

An abbreviated *Poetry Now* is in your hands, as SPC begins its 30th year. This is due to the considerable efforts of our editor, Frank Graham, and a growing team of volunteers who assist him in various ways – Cynthia Linville, Aaron Gerwer, Lisa Jones, Martha Ann Blackman, and Henry Chen. Thanks to all of you, plus others who have assisted in the process of writing, editing, proofing, printing, labeling, distributing, and mailing. It's a labor of love!

Thanks also to Mimi and Burnett Miller for allowing us to invade your lovely home for poetry and music last month – we had a record crowd, and an appreciative audience, for our poets James DenBoer and Mary Mackey, and the lively music ensemble Junkyard Burlesque. Those of you who made it, thanks for your contributions – in these times, our financial health depends more than ever on contributors and members.

Down at 25th and R, we bid farewell to our co-renters and partners-in-the-arts Asylum Gallery – we'll miss Ann Tracy and Cherie Hacker, and the ever-changing art on the walls. For almost 4 years we shared our urban-industrial art space, and I want to thank them for their efforts. If we couldn't share the space, we couldn't afford to be there! Luckily, SPC has a new "partner" arriving in 2009, and they will also be planning events, adorning the walls, and working on behalf of the Sacramento Scene – *Midtown Monthly* will be sharing space with SPC, and they are planning gallery openings and more, beginning soon. We look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

Barack Obama was recently photographed holding Derek Walcott's Selected Poems. Let's call 2009 "Year of the Poet." We could use one.

Bob

TWO POEMS BY Taylor Graham

In addition to *Rattlesnake Review* and *Medusa's Kitchen*, Taylor Graham's poems have appeared in *America*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere. Ms. Graham is included in the anthology, *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, and her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor* was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

After Visiting the Care Home

By Taylor Graham

Five clean saucers wait for cakes
uncut, for three fresh lemons
sliced on a hand-me-down platter;
the dark water of cupped tea. Talk
drifts in dribs and mother-drabs.
Four friends nod they understand.
Everyone has had a mother.

But how long daylight lasts
through an interminable care-
home afternoon, gossiping
like nurse's aides behind its
doors and curtains.

A friend instructs you, breathe
deeply to inflate the belly, then
when you're alone, let it out
in hilarious sobs. But beyond
the sliding glass door, your dog
begins howling all the licking
wounds of his life.

Mother's Silks

By Taylor Graham

It's hard for her to remember exactly when
there weren't 5-and-10s on the Main Street of every town
they drove through – when it all stopped being
cozy, instinctive, gravitational as home –
as if the scarves in Oriental prints, the silken flowers
were a planet unto themselves,
where garden parties were the way of life, aspics and
organzas reincarnated for each occasion

and a daughter would grow out of tomboy
and start dreaming her future; might set down –
carefully! – that tiny porcelain horse and weigh its price
against the wanting
for it to come alive in her hand. She'll learn
the tricks of make-believe – a hundred years might go
to praise those chances. Half a hundred
have passed like dime stores from her mind.

Request for donations for our 2009 Remodel

We need furniture and lamps for our
remodel. Make the Poetry Center the best
little poetry venue in town. Donate your
gently used or new furniture and lamp(s)!

Call 916-606-4303 to donate!

Join SPC

\$30 annual membership gets you Poetry Now
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Name _____

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Sacramento CA 95816

TWO POEMS By Michael Lee Johnson

Michael Lee Johnson is a poet and freelance writer from Itasca, Illinois who has been published in more than 280 publications worldwide, from the Republic of Sierra Leone to Scotland, Australia to Africa, and Fiji to Finland. He is author of two poetry collections, *From Which Place the Morning Rises* and *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom*. He can be found online at poetryman.mysite.com

Gingerbread Lady

By Michael Lee Johnson

Gingerbread lady,
no sugar or cinnamon spice;
years ago arthritis and senility took their toll.
Crippled mind moves in then out, like an old sexual
adventure
blurred in an imagination of fingertip thoughts.
Who in hell remembers the characters?
There was George, her lover, near the bridge at the
Chicago River:
she missed his funeral; her friends were there.
She always made feather-light of people dwelling on death,
but black and white she remembers well.
The past is the present; the present is forgotten.
Who remembers Gingerbread Lady?
Sometimes lazy-time tea with a twist of lime,
sometimes drunken-time screwdriver twist with clarity.
She walks in scandals; sometimes she walks in soft night
shoes.

Her live-in maid smirks as Gingerbread Lady gums her
food,
false teeth forgotten in a custom-imprinted cup
with water, vinegar, and ginger.
The maid died. Gingerbread Lady looks for a new maid.
Years ago, arthritis and senility took their toll.
Yesterday, a new maid walked into the nursing home.
Ginger forgot to rise out of bed;
no sugar, or cinnamon toast.

Harvest Time

By Michael Lee Johnson

A Métis Indian lady, drunk,
hands blanketed over as in prayer,
over a large brown fruit basket
naked of fruit, no vine, no vineyard
inside—approaches the Edmonton,
Alberta adoption agency.
There are only spirit gods
inside her empty purse.

Inside, an infant,
refrained from life,
with a fruity wine sap apple
wedged like a teaspoon
of autumn sun
inside its mouth.
A shallow pool of tears starts
to mount in native blue eyes.
Snuffling, the mother offers
a slim smile, turns away.
She slithers voyeuristically
through near slum streets,
and alleyways,
looking for drinking buddies
to share a hefty pint
of applejack wine.

Editor's Note:

"Imprint" in the October issue was incorrectly attributed to H. Allen Blair. The author is Blair H. Allen.

TWO POEMS BY Jenny Jiang

Jenny Jiang grew up in rural Iowa and started writing poetry after moving to the Sacramento area four years ago. She's a regular at the Sacramento Poetry Center's Tuesday night workshop and her poems have appeared in *Poetry Now*. She won the grand prize at the Berkley Poet's Dinner in 2008. Her primary work is raising a three year old son and as well as serving in her church and neighborhood.

Psalm 66:16

By Jenny Jiang

How will I tell of all your works? This afternoon
I walked on a path. First I heard the snap of green
walnuts raining around me and then I looked
for the squirrel scrambling across the long arms of a tree.
My telling is the shreds of white nutmeat
on the dark bone of shell.
The littered mess I leave beneath me.

What can I say but I've eaten again.
The sun has held the earth, the earth the tree,
the tree again this fruit and I have ripped it
and eaten and sent pieces to ping
the littered music of almost
the only hallelujah I know
ringing on the path beneath me.

Supplicant

By Jenny Jiang

Why will you not have what you ask for, since I am the ground of your beseeching?

—Julian of Norwich.

He swings his hands wide, pulls all the park—
leaves and stems— to himself, says: I want berries.
But the blackberries we picked here last fall are still green knots.

I'm all business and bad news. No berries.
Then we see, in the shaded corner—
one broken mulberry branch, swung low

like a shot arrow in the grass
so a two-year-old could pluck its spangled beads.
I want him to tell me how it happened.

To tell me about caterpillar-hope and a secret tongue.
To tell me how to want again.
He only says, Tastes good!

And they do.
They taste like being eight in Iowa.
Like reaching my skinny-self, tiptoe, from the roof
of my father's pickup into a high green dark
for a purple wild that stains
mouth, chin, fingers, fists, feet
and tastes like prayer.

Carol Louise Moon has been published in *Brevities*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Poetry Now*, *Updraft*, and *Poets Forum Magazine*. She started the El Camino Chapter of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets and has authored two chapbooks – *Fuzzy Spiral Twist* and *Some Roman Alpha Letters Make Good Friends* – and a broadside, *Mindfully Moon*.

Forklift Operator

By Carol Louise Moon

See him through the window,
the forklift's little window
with the large forklift,
lifting.

Lifting,
sitting up high as he rolls along, rolling
through the green grocery aisle
past fish and meats.

When he meets others
he uplifts them with his words;
a preacher preaching –
a fork on the aisle

like a fork in the road,
one-way leading to Heaven
one-way leading to hell.
What! a heavenly smell of fish?

What a heavenly smell of fish!
Now he's preaching like a preacher,
reaching like a reacher.

Now he's dying.
Dying to get off work early
to see the preacher's daughter.

Matt Veazey studied creative writing at the University of Arizona in the 1980s, and his poems are influenced by his love of Western landscapes. He now lives in Sacramento and his work has been published in *Convergence*, *Rattlesnake Review*, and *Medusa's Kitchen*.

The Shade of the Holy Spirit

By Matt Veazey

ground swells and cross swells converge
doubling at once into towering waves with
long overhanging crests that topple and tumble
rolling over and over and are
blown into foamy streaks
which race off with the veering wind
the oceans equivalent of whiteout

shaken by heavy seas into images of
subterranean dwellings
rammed earth
adobe bricks
hand hewn timbers
dark woolen tapestries
walk in hearths
wall murals
dirt floors
sod roofs
a sipapu

it is clear now why Stonewall Jackson
moments before passing smiled in delirium
and softly requested to cross the river and
rest in shade of the trees
and why Cubans pray and make offerings
to Babalu-Aye
to save them a place
in La Sombra del
Espiritu Santo

UC DAVIS EXTENSION

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

SPC members now receive a special 10% discount on all UC Davis Extension writing courses! For more information, check the website at http://extension.ucdavis.edu/unit/arts_and_humanities/.

Please note: This is an unadvertised discount and SPC members must self-identify for it to be applied. At this time, discounts are not available when enrolling *and paying* online; we recommend that SPC members enroll by phone at (800) 752-0881. In addition, discounts must be applied when enrolling and cannot be combined or applied retroactively.

***Rattlesnake Press will be snoozing
during January, but be sure to
stop into The Book Collector,
1008 - 24th St., Sacramento
to spend your Christmas money
on our selection of poetry books and calendars.***

<p>MEANWHILE</p> <p>JANUARY 15 is the deadline for WTF!!!</p> <p>the new quarterly journalzine from Poetry Unplugged, the long-running reading series at Luna's Café in Sacramento. Anyone over 18 is welcome to submit.</p> <p>Go to rattlesnakepress.com and click on the WTF page for submission guidelines or talk to Editor Frank Andrick. The journal will premiere at Luna's on February 19.</p>	<p><i>Coming February 11:</i></p> <p>A chapbook from Julia Connor</p> <p>A littlesnake broadside from Josh Fernandez</p> <p>A Rattlesnake Reprint from D.R. Wagner</p> <p>Check out rattlesnakepress.com and look for DAILY poetry/events/gossip on MEDUSA'S KITCHEN (medusaskitchen.blogspot.com)</p>
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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.

Submit poems and a 30-50 word bio to clinville@csus.edu. (Electronic submissions preferred.) Submissions may also be mailed along with a SASE to SPC 1719 - 25th Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.

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 916-979-9706.

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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.

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Or visit our website at

www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org.



The Sacramento Poetry Center Presents

The Cathy Washington Prize

First Annual Poetry Book Contest

Winning book manuscript will be published by
The Sacramento Poetry Center Press.

Winner will also receive a prize of:
\$1000.00 and 50 free copies of their winning book.

GUIDELINES: Submit a manuscript of 48-70 numbered pages of original poetry in any style. Manuscript must contain 2 title pages: Name and contact information (including email address, if possible) should appear on first title page only. Name should not appear anywhere else. Manuscript should be typed, single-spaced, paginated, and bound with a clip.

The Sacramento Poetry Center will also consider publishing additional manuscripts from the contest.

Check for \$20.00, US, per entry (multiple entries OK) should be made out to The Sacramento Poetry Center. Paid-up members of the Sacramento Poetry Center may enter the contest for a reduced fee of \$15. Please note that members of SPC will not receive preferential treatment in the judging process. Include a table of contents page and an acknowledgments page for magazine or anthology publications. Will read entries postmarked between **January 1, 2009 and March 31, 2009**. Enclose an SASE for announcement of the winner.

Entries should be mailed to:

The Sacramento Poetry Center

Poetry Book Contest

P.O. Box 160406,

Sacramento, CA 95816

For more information, please visit our website:

<http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org>

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