

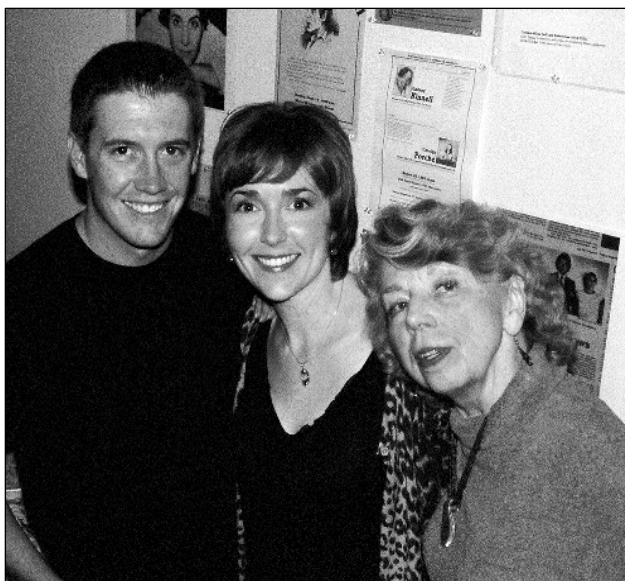


poetry now

The Sacramento Poetry Center's Monthly Newsletter Journal for poetry

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

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



President's Thank-you – December 2009

Some might call 2009 a banner year for SPC – perhaps we have even matched SPC's "golden age" with growing audiences, three new books, a hugely successful workshop, new venues, and new partnerships with local arts groups. Now we need to look forward and keep doing what we've been doing for thirty years – helping people share their poetry in more ways than ever. If we do this, our best years are still ahead of us. Looking back at 2009, we have a lot of people and organizations to thank for this success:

The Borchard Foundation

Wells Fargo Foundation

Rattlesnake Press and Kathy Kieth

The Sacramento Room and Claire Ellis

The Tomales Bay Workshop and UC Davis Extension Creative Writing Program

BL Kennedy for the June tribute to Allen Ginsberg

Poets and Writers for support of Confluence and our spring workshop – (mark your calendars for April 16, 2010)

SMAC – the Sacramento Metro Arts Commission – for support of SPC and so many local arts providers

The Sacramento Bee – Carlos Alcala – for his coverage of the local literary scene

Capital Public Radio – Craig McMurray for PSA support, and Jeffrey Callison of Insight for coverage of poetry

The Sacramento Public Library for providing support for new programs coming up in 2010

The Crocker Art Museum for supporting events and for future plans for poetry

Midtown Monthly for coverage of SPC's 30th Anniversary

Ray Tatar and Polly Goodall, California Stage

Fremont Park Neighborhood Association, CADA and Rob Fong, for help with the May Children's Festival

Richard Hansen for making us all look good – posters, the website, graphics, a home away from home

Lisa Jones for interviews, Cynthia Linville for editorial work, Henry Chen for graphics (Poetry Now)

Danyen Powell and the Tuesday Night workshop for the Tuesday Night workshop

Alliance Française for allowing us to use their space for our spring workshop

BJ Shaw for editorial and layout work for SPC Press

Mimi and Burnett Miller – your continued generosity has helped SPC in so many ways

Manny, Charlie, François, Heather, Terry, Andy, the list goes on: You all know how much you do.

Most importantly, we have thrived in 2009 thanks to an incredibly active SPC board of directors – which is still growing. The following is just a partial list of what these volunteer board members have taken on, presumably because they like poetry!

Frank Graham: hosting, plus the herculean effort of maintaining a monthly Poetry Now

Tim Kahl: the weekly email reminders, hosting coordinator, workshop planner, Tule Review, video postings

Mary Zeppa: The Millers' party, Keepers of the Flame, Favorite Poem Reading, Library readings, keeping me sane

president's thank-you continued on next page...

president's thank-you continued...

Linda Collins: Membership coordination, grant assistance, now Tule Review

Sandra Senne: Treasurer, working on grants, helping with events, keeping track of what most poets don't

Stan Zumbiel: Coming to readings, Being the voice of reason

Theresa McCourt: Outreach project, Children's Festival, Tule Review

Rebecca Morrison: Hosting, Children's Festival, Reading series at UC Davis

Emmanuel Sigauke: Monday hosting, Tule Review, Keepers of the Flame

Kate Asche: Keepers of the Flame, bringing new friends to SPC, famous cookies

Brad Buchanan: SPC Press, The SPC Book Contest, High School Contest, Tule Review, idea man

Jack Schouten: Our newest board member has plans for hosting and editorial work

Prospective members: Paco Marquez, Lawrence Dinkins, Trina Drotar.

Without a doubt I've left off dozens who have helped make Sacramento a growing "literary town" – venue hosts, bloggers and website makers, workshop organizers, past and present laureates, fiction and memoir writers, teachers and poets and spoken word artists and mixed-genre experimentors. Please allow me to thank you all collectively. In 1985, I recall Galway Kinnell told his writing class at the beginning of a week-long workshop. "We're all in this together. It's not one of us against the other. It's all of us against the clock." 24 years have passed, and there's still poems to write and work to do. Good thing we're all in this together. Thanks.

David Kowalczyk lives and writes in Oakfield, New York. He has taught English in Mexico, Guatemala, and South Korea. His poetry and fiction have appeared in seven anthologies and over one hundred literary magazines, including *California Quarterly*, *Maryland Review*, and *Istanbul Literary Review*.

Join us Weds., December 9, to celebrate the release of a new chapbook from Rattlesnake Press by Carol Frith (*The Thread of Dreams*). That's at The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., Sacramento, 7:30 PM. Free!

AMARANTHINE

By David Kowalczyk

This word is
a drunken star slowly
slowly toppling from the sky.

Its heart is
sweeter than baklava.
Its face is
a room full of rosaries.

Its gentle almond eyes
make the world sparkle.
Its voice is ten times
softer than soft
could ever be.

This word always
walks on tiptoes.

DIVERTISSEMENT

By David Kowalczyk

Blinded by fantasy,
this word is
a witch on wheels.
Its parents are Babe Ruth and Greta Garbo.
It drives a vintage yellow Peugeot,
and is a connoisseur of Cuban cigars
and single malt scotch.

Its eyes are sweet with dreams.
Its heart is more like
a Christmas tree
than a flower.
Its lips bite like scorpions.
Its smile is full
of scandals yet to manifest.

Judy Halebsky is currently in Tokyo studying Japanese literature on a MEXT scholarship. While a student at UC Davis, he lived in Sacramento and participated in SPC's Tuesday night workshop. Her manuscript *Sky=Empty* won the 2009 New Issues Poetry Prize and is forthcoming from New Issues Poetry & Prose. The following three poems are part of that manuscript and were previously published in *Tertulia*.

PROGNOSIS

By Judy Halebsky

They are making a record of my trespasses
my mistakes and translations

I was not good enough
to balance a jar of water on my head
or to walk along the balance beam
doing cherry drops
or to look you straight in the eye

when I can't sleep Lexy tells me
about the thorns and the scratchy branches
about flying up above them into the clouds

when I can't sleep Lexy tells me
to draw a circle in chalk in the driveway
this is the world, she says
I'm bringing in sand dunes, salt ocean, soda pop,
August sun, ice cream and nothing else

I try to rest my hips and my thorny chest
and forget all the rows of numbers
the proportions of blood to water

to tell the truth
the circle's not big enough
unless you can believe
that you can bring in the ocean
which also brings in the sky
and all the trees
and the birds and beach towels and sun hats

but then I'd have to look you
straight in the eye
and when it's not dark
it's too bright
to see at all

YELLOW WOOD

By Judy Halebsky

I have left the bed unmade
calls unanswered
my bookcase is out on the sidewalk
my wax kite flying without a string

somewhere in this body is a compass
that must realign
to metal detectors, to flight patterns, to unfurnished
rooms

this is my library card
this is my plane ticket

ippai means one cup
ippai means I've had enough

standing on a street corner in Peterborough
the snow is coming down in April
there are two roads from here

力一杯
a strong cup:
with all my might

別れの杯をくむ
dividing a cup and drinking:
to leave

HAIKU RELATIONSHIP

By Laura Baumann

Your coat looks so warm
I could snuggle inside it.
Is there room for me?

Smooth glass on the pond
Skating, you lift me – I leap.
But how will I land?

I'd hoped for so long
to feel safe like a snow bank,
but now I am cold.

Laura Baumann
grew up in
Minneapolis,
Minnesota. She
is an attorney at
the California
Secretary of
State's office.
Laura's poetry has
been published in
the *Rattlesnake
Review*, and she's
read at Poetry at
The VOX. She
participates in the
Sacramento
Poetry Center's
Tuesday Poetry
Workshop.

SEASHELLS

By Laura Baumann

Over and over
we practice the "S"

Not like *that*, like *this*.
He sounds so hopeful,

as if my speech could
be molded like clay.

I tap my tongue
on the soft gum ridge,

behind the curve of
a huge overbite.

I brace myself for
what I have to say -

*Sally sells seashells
by the seashore*

the most painful sentence
I will ever know.

OUT OF THE NEST

By Judy Halebsky

Maya's baby wakes up at the crinkle of a letter opening
or the click of a coffee cup on the table

he's like us, Mom says, *he gets hurt easily*

what Maya really hopes is that he won't be shy
and stand like her in the doorframe
between hinges and window glass

Grandfather counted five directions
north, south, east, west and here

we're fighting Mom's cancer with everything there is

she's pushing me back to school
dropping me off at the Quik Mart for the night bus

she's waving
and I'm waving back
but the bus is dark
and the station bright yellow
so all she can see is herself waving
in the row of windows passing

Coming December 9 from Rattlesnake Press!

The Thread of Dreams

by
Carol Frith

...and a brand-new issue of
Rattlesnake Review!

Now available at

The Book Collector—

The fourth issue of WTF!!!

—A quarterly journal

celebrating Poetry Unplugged

at Luna's Café in Sacramento

—Edited by frank andrick

*Check out all things
ophidian at
rattlesnakepress.com
—Poetry with fangs!*

*...and look for DAILY
poetry/events/gossip on
MEDUSA'S KITCHEN*

medusaskitchen.blogspot.com

Join us at

The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., Sacramento
Dec. 9, 7:30 PM. Free!

Lyn Lifshin has published over 120 books including three books from Black Sparrow: *Cold Comfort*, *Before it's Light*, and *Another Woman Who Looks like Me*. Recent books include *The Licorice Daughter*, *Mirrors*, *Desire*, *92 Rapple*, *Lost in the Fog*, *Persephone*, *Nutley Pond*, *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness*, and *Light at the End*. She has edited four anthologies and is the subject of a documentary film, *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass*. Her web site is www.lynlifshin.com and her most recent book *Katrina* is forthcoming from Poetic Matrix Press.

LIKE ANY READY FRUIT READY TO BE DEVOURED

By Lyn Lifshin

I moved toward him. Of course it wasn't really like that. But that transference they say happens with shrinks can go both ways with any teacher. In his arms it felt like night, each move glittery. He said my words turned him on, glued to the me I was on my website till his wife said "is it that woman again?" and tho I would like to erase each date in the poems he reads, we are both playing at what doesn't exist, walk in parts in a play that closes before it opens

THE MAD GIRL STRADDLES TWO LIVES LIKE HORSES GOING IN DIFFERENT

By Lyn Lifshin

something inside her feels about to split like those prisoners pulled by stallions, one east, one west. She breathes fantasy, in the mint of his lips and his hips against her. Once a week this fire leaves a stain, tattoo that tells its own story. She goes through the other life, feeds the cat, stamps the mail. You wouldn't recognize her in Betsey Johnson tulle and velvet, tuberose scented skin for the mirage. Unreal except for how her ballroom shoes wear thinner, the sole a membrane shriveling like a hymen as she puts on sweats and sneakers, fleece for the space between what is and could be

Julia B. Levine, Poet and Psychologist, On "Crafty Unconscious Construction"

Julia B. Levine's most recent poetry collection is *Ditch-tender* (University of Tampa Press, 2007). Her previous books are *Ask* (University of Tampa Press, 2003), which won the 2002 Tampa Review Prize for Poetry, and *Practicing For Heaven* (Anhinga Press, 1999), which won the 1998 Anhinga Prize for Poetry. Levine has published widely in literary journals, and is currently at work on a fourth collection. By profession, Levine is a practicing clinical psychologist. As a poet, her themes include cruelty and cruelty's aftermath, how we find patterns in experience after suffering or bearing witness to trauma. Levine's work explores the struggle to accommodate cruelty within one's worldview, to confront the human capacity for evil and then go on feeling and experiencing fully. She addresses situations large and small, with a concentration on the interpersonal frictions that permeate domestic life. Levine also excels at writing the luminous, teasing apart the layers of numinous, inarticulable experience that sometimes find us in the out of doors. Deeply invested in the natural world, many of Levine's poems are set by water and in other wild places. Adroit at skipping and swerving through surprising images and associative leaps of thought, Levine says, "I'm not a good storyteller. I just love moments of experience."

Jennette: How did you find the cover art for your most recent book?

Levine: My father had told us that he had Lou Gehrig's disease, and because he was a neurologist, he knew he had two to five years to live. I decided I really wanted to dedicate this book to him, and I already knew there were going to be poems--because I had already written some of the poems about his illness--and I was at his house. I went down to visit him and my mom, and . . . everything was starting to take him a really long time, like just getting dressed was starting to take a really long time. So I was . . . waiting, and . . . my father was an amazing lover of art, lover of music, and lover of literature. So they have an amazing collection of books, and one of the books was this huge art book of artists with epilepsy--my dad is a neurologist, so he treats a lot of people with epilepsy . . . So I was looking through the book, and I saw these images that I loved. I just loved them, and I thought, how would I ever get ahold of somebody like that? Well it turned out that in the book they actually had contact information . . . I gave her [artist Alexandra Rozenman] my second book, and after she read it, she said, let's do it.

. . .

Jennette: How do your work in poetry and your work in psychology feed each other or fight with each other?

Levine: I [didn't work] with poetry for a while because I have a pretty demanding profession . . . There was a long time I thought I had sort of settled. My parents were so unsupportive of my writing, and I was so unsupported as a young writer when I was an undergraduate and I was told by the writing department that I wouldn't be allowed to major in creative writing because I had no talent, so I was kind of forced out of doing that in some ways--that's not an excuse, obviously, but I didn't. And I always felt bad about that for the longest time; I wished I had followed my dream. I think maybe now that I'm on the other side of my life now, I'm getting old--[here Levine is interrupted by her interviewer's skeptical expression]--well, you know, fifty-one . . . I'm at the point in my life where I have to decide what I'm really going to decide . . . I used to be embarrassed to tell my poet friends that I'm a psychologist; I used to be embarrassed to tell my psychologist friends that I'm a poet; now that doesn't bother me. If anything I think my ability to write has really helped me as a clinician. I know how to listen.

Jennette: If you're dealing with a narrative of trauma, how do you figure out where, for purposes of the poem, the story begins and ends? Finding the narrative arc seems very challenging.

Levine: That's just the essence of trauma, because there is no beginning and end. And in fact a lot of what trauma work does is help people to realize that there has already been an end, because they're trapped inside a dynamic and they believe they're still in it . . . In some ways, the poet's work and the psychologist's work are the same: to try to find a form. Even if it's a fractured form, even if it's a completely incoherent form . . . Anything that gives form is in some ways better than nothing.

...

Jennette: You mentioned Brenda Hillman's images, and I did want to ask you about your image construction process. Here's an image from "Rain at Night": "Rain grinds air into sugary phonemes." I read that, and I thought . . . *I have to ask her how she came up with that one.*

Levine: It's funny, I was reading Brenda Hillman when I wrote that. Sometimes when I'm reading a book, I jot down the words that I love in it, and *phonemes* is a word that I love . . . She uses a lot of images of sugar in one of her books, *Loose Sugar* . . . I think I was reading my favorite one, which is . . . her book that's based on the Gnostic Gospels . . . My image construction is a pretty crafty unconscious construction. *Crafty* in the sense of *devious* crafty. I will look at other books, I will look at other words . . . that I don't normally think of . . . I will purposely put those words in front of me. I'm leafing through books, I'm writing words down on cards . . . That's my devious little plot . . . There's a lot of just generating, and then there's a lot of throwing away.

...

Jennette: Can you give us a sneak preview of what you're working on now?

Levine: . . . I don't think my themes will change all that much. My obsessions are my obsessions. I think they're going to be with me until I die. I love children, I love nature, I love the question of time. I feel more contextual about time. I feel more [content] in my tiny little parentheses of time, and I don't have any illusions about it the way I used to, so maybe that's changed . . . Change is much less painful. I'm much happier with what is.

...

Jennette: Do you have a sense of some clear checklist in your mind of how things have changed from book one to book three to what you're working on now?

Levine: Well I think your first book is always the hardest to write, because it's so impacted by your own autobiography. And I think once you're freed of that, it's a lot easier to be able to approach your writing in a more craft-based way. So I think there's much more of a sense of freedom of craft in my second and third book than there was in my first. And I think I felt much less compelled to write narratives. Which in some ways fits my personality better. I'm not a good storyteller. I just love moments of experience.

Dorine Jennette ~ www.dorinejennette.com

Poems by Julia B. Levine	In the contents salvaged from my dead friend's storage unit,
<p>Ode to Fruit flies</p> <p>They lend a sparse fur to the air just above the bananas,</p> <p>or hover like a small cloud over the cut daffodils on my table,</p> <p>while two or three tread wings in a glass of wine.</p> <p><i>Urge and urge and urge</i>, Whitman wrote, about the coming apart,</p> <p>the coming differently back again. When I woke this morning</p> <p>there were yellow tulips opening in the garden. I stood at the sink, filling the kettle,</p> <p>and looked out at each corseted, broken flower.</p> <p>In my dream, wind was tossing a child between trees,</p> <p>and my father had returned from death to catch her, just in time.</p> <p>Sometimes I need the truth close and in my face.</p> <p>Sometimes, when I no longer wish to be diminished,</p> <p>the very air flares-- a sudden hallelujah</p> <p>strung in jostled, tiny lanterns across the changing mind of sky.</p>	<p>a corner of an envelope stamped with an orange fishing lure falls from <i>The Best American Poetry of 1990</i>,</p> <p>and I can see my thin friend carrying this book down to the lingered ruin of a slough, where he'll sit alone,</p> <p>under a sky festering with bats, reading, <i>We have lived with wings</i>. Most of life is a vanishing river of hours.</p> <p>Still, every time my friend smiled, you could make out the tug of an insatiable dark casting him out, reeling him in.</p> <p>The way last night, my estranged grandfather sat on a curb beside me, dressed in a suit from the old country,</p> <p>confused and crying, and though I hated how he'd touched me as a child, I did my best to hold him</p> <p>and woke in the cold, October morning thinking of another line in another poem-- <i>You knock without knowing that you knocked</i>,</p> <p>which I think speaks for all the dead we don't know how to carry, or the mirror</p> <p>that every autumn holds up to the passing year-- all those bloodred maples and wild geese crying down the flyway,</p> <p>a snow white corner, a flaming orange lure falling from their lost sky into mine...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">---- in memory of Arthur Heebler</p>

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Submit poems and a 30-50 word bio to clinville@csus.edu. (Electronic submissions preferred)

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Editor: Frank Graham

Poetry Editor: Cynthia Linville

Website Editor: Richard Hansen

Interview Editor: Lisa Jones

Interviews: Dorine Jennette

Book Review Editor: Emmanuel Sigauke

Design Editor: Henry Chen

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, Tule Review, anthologies and books), workshops, special events, and an ongoing reading series. Funded primarily by members, SPC is run by a volunteer board of directors. We welcome your input and your interest.

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1719 - 25th Street, Sacramento CA 95816

bobstanley@sbcglobal.net 916-979-9706

www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org



Cover photo of Joyce Odam

by Katy Brown

Front top photo of workshop attendees by Katy Brown

Photograph of Myself as a Toddler Learning to Count

Julia B. Levine

in the bath, my head hovering cloudlike
over the slight trunk of my body.

the water drawn so low,
only my feet and calves are submerged.

I am not so much naked as still clothed in skin.
Lips parted, delight halved by hesitation,

my right hand appears caught between open
and closed--

a strange waver, a delicate suggestion,
like an etching in the floor of damage.

Someone has cut my white blonde hair
into a wobbly bowl cut,

and it shines
in a small oval of light above my ear.

Three Lincoln logs and a tiny plastic horse
float inside the tub.

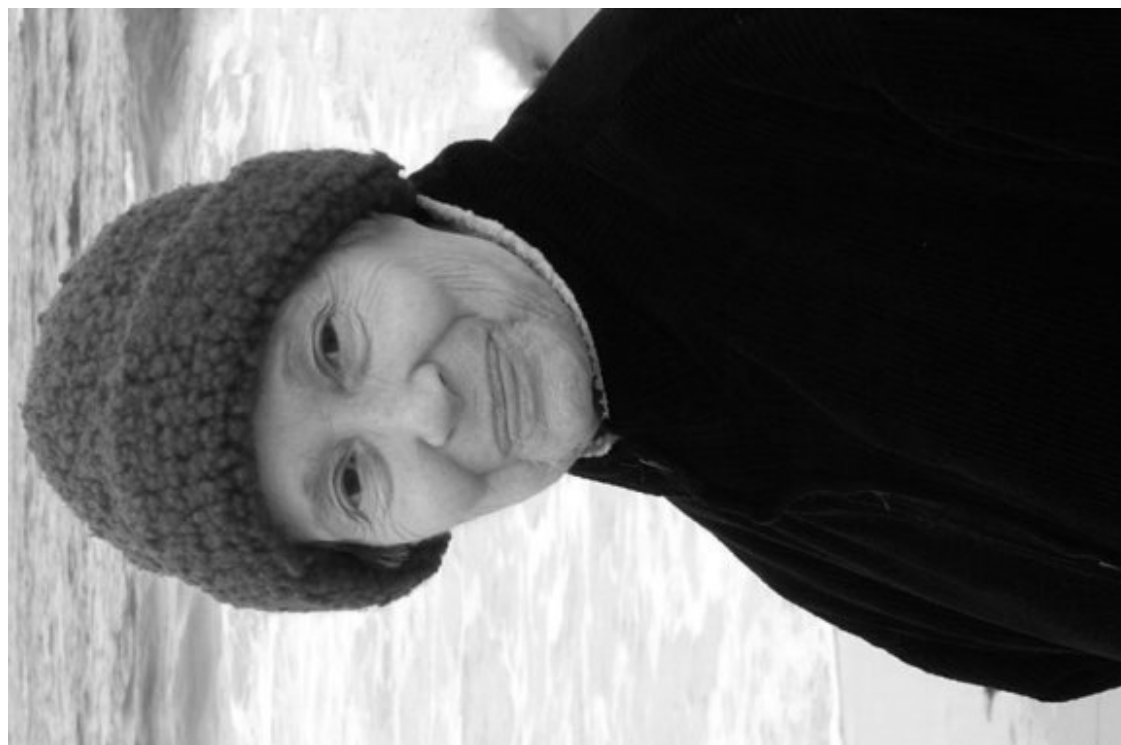
Who said it was okay to put those toys in water?
Who begins the self as an ordinal,

lifting each dripping object in sequence,
asking, *One? One? One?*



poetry now

December 2009

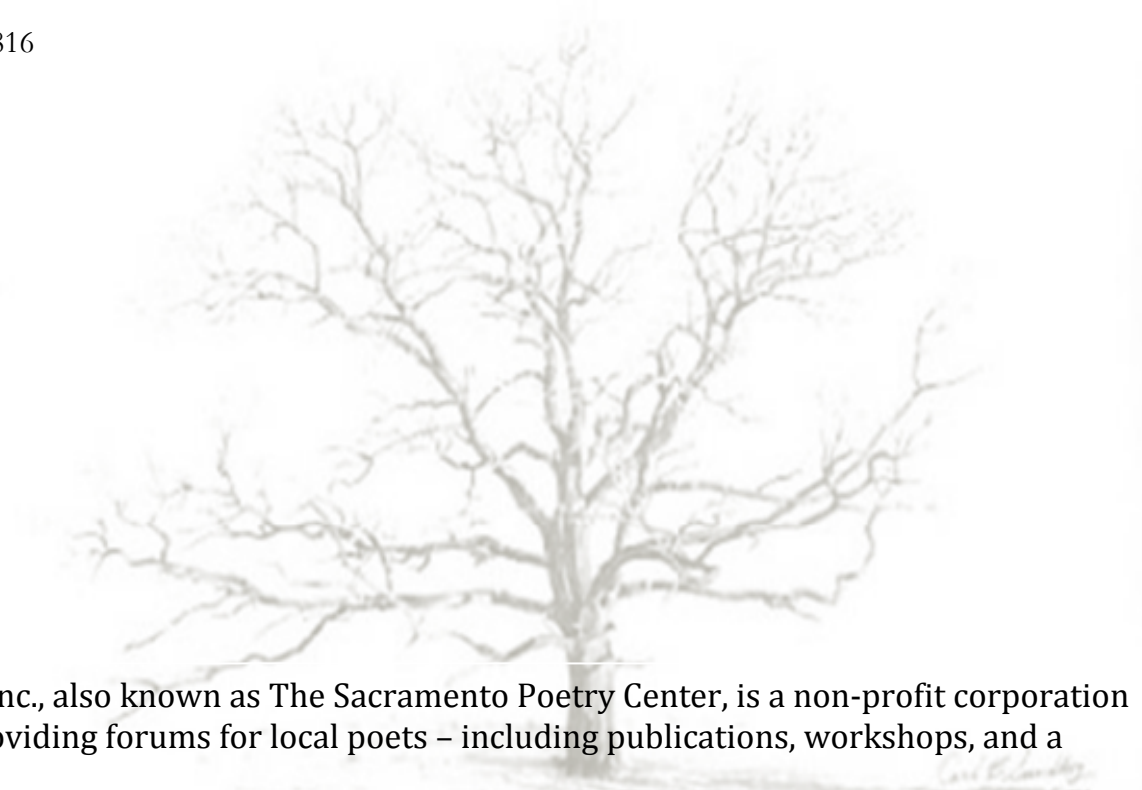


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