



poetry now

JULY 2009

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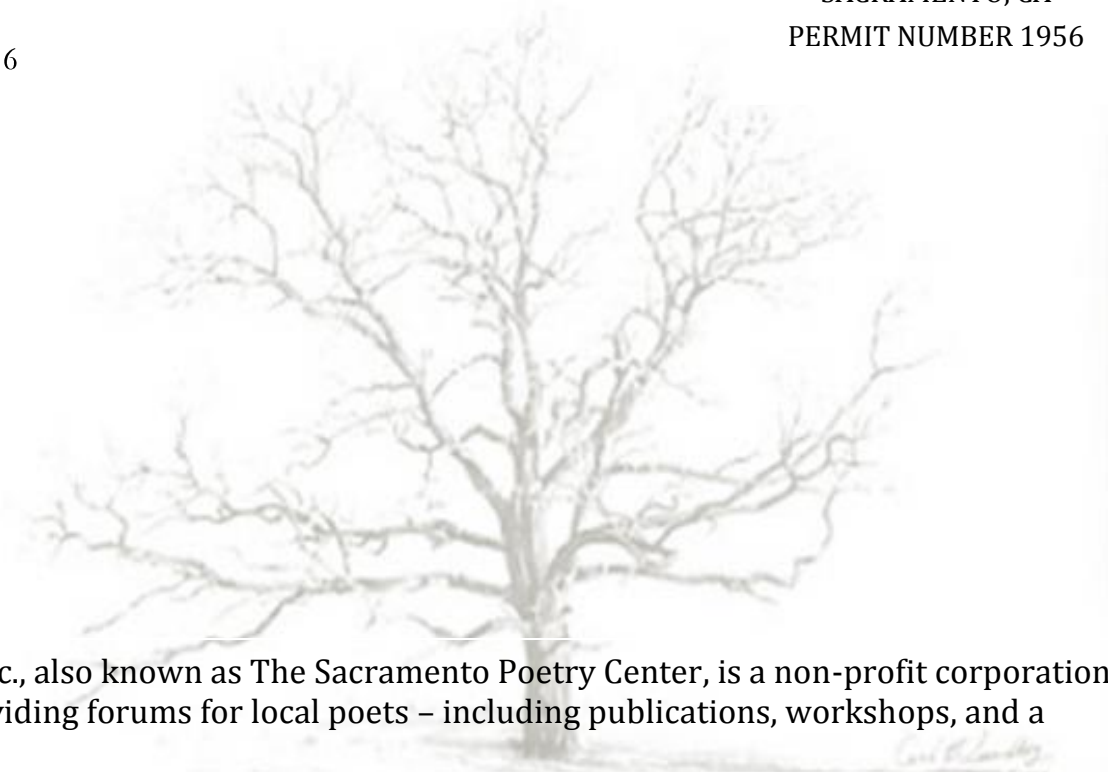


A PUBLICATION OF THE SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER

poetry now

The Poet Tree, Inc.
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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.



poetry now

The Sacramento Poetry Center's Monthly Newsletter Journal for poetry

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

first memory of spc, sacramento 1997

ten folks around a table at hamburger mary's filling up chairs slowly between five-fifty and six-ten, chatting, *what's going on*, heather and martin, luke, mary, danyen, al, stan, merrylee, maybe julia and traci I didn't know any of them, but sat down and they talked for a while until the waiter came and we ordered burgers so we had to hurry with the meeting and the eating to set up for the reading down at the ballet building. 17th and K - Studio B - big square room, railings for dancers, two walls mirrored so sound bounced around and luke hosted and I sat and listened for an hour or more. Poetry. *It has been a long time*, I thought, *since I have bathed in sounds like this*, and knew I had found a place to hear and feel words the way I once had and these were the people (I guessed) I'd do it with. So Mondays I came and scribbled on pieces of paper, one night finally standing up to read at open mic - more than a little nervous, but this was a place where poetry had a chance, where heads nodded, hands clapped the way they should when a new writer gives it a try - poets playing with memory finding an angle words to craft a poem and that's how a decade goes by, or more, listening to a poet or two remembering a story one night in a crowd becoming a crowd of nights that spun by, filled with a thousand poems and faces, the crafting of an image or a life on a page, or a napkin, or a flyer.

Bob Stanley, SPC President

Special Poems from Francisco X. Alarcón

CHILE BY HEART

Francisco X. Alarcón, Chicano poet and educator, was born in Los Angeles, in 1954; he was raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, and came back to live in California at the age of seventeen years old. He is the author of eleven volumes of poetry, including, *From the Other Side of Night, Snake Poems, Of Dark Love, Sonnets to Madness and Other Misfortunes*. His most recent book of bilingual poetry for children, *Animal Poems of the Iguazú* (Children's Book Press 2008), is an ecological call to protect a natural wonder of the Earth. He teaches at the University of California, Davis, where he is Director of the Spanish for Native Speakers Program. Francisco has been a finalist nominated for *Poet Laureate* of California in two occasions. He teaches at the University of California, Davis. The poems published here are part of a section titled "*Chile de corazón / Chile by Heart*" of an unpublished collection of poems and they were written *in situ* by Francisco wrote during a visit to Chile that took place during the last week of May, 2009.

Lección de Isla Negra	Isla Negra Lesson
la vida es como una gran caracola	life is like a big sea shell in a spin
que entre más gira y más se enrolla	the more it gets all rolled up
más se adentra a lo hondo del mar	the farther it gets deeper into the sea

Robert Pringle is Scottish and has been widely published in the US, Canada, the UK, and several European countries. He took first prize in the 2004 Scottish International Open Poetry Competition and has authored two chapbooks, *Cold Front* and *Inventina God*, available from Pudding House Publications. He currently works in a metal fabricating factory in Ohio.

CONSERVATION

By Robert Pringle

"The Radical invents the views. When has worn them out, the Conservative adopts them."

– Mark Twain

1.
The streets are white with salt causing donuts, spinouts, pedestrians with skating moves they thought impossible.

Weathermen say, "More salt, occasional blizzards."

Birds look like their feathers are sweating,

and authorities warn of price gouging on skin cream. Children want to make salt men, but it won't pack --

leaving them to lick their mittens to which parents add iodine . . . chemical production down to medicines and disinfectants.

2.
Climatologists see Tennessee as the new Florida; the Green and White mountains as Canadian islands;

and California what Chile was. Churches have gone mobile, fleeing storm clouds of fire, ice, and acid rain.

Illegal immigrants flood south, shadowed by schools of crocodile and shark. Left behind, a continent of priceless amenities.

Outside taxonomic tradition, The Neo-Conservative Ice Age, named for its deniers, has no terminal moraine.

LISTENING FOR THE CREEK

By Philip A. Waterhouse

Overdue, drenching hard rain comes sudden, and companion wind, steady, also gusting turned my little black umbrella upside down, inside out, had forgotten about keeping its metal folder staples pressed down to the scalp, the wayward commotion overall spinning three small fans in a yard where Verde Vista and Arroyo Road intersect, the fans had petal-like blades, two variously colored, the biggest an off-white loner, the troika in all up about three feet on thin bamboo stalks, the big one somehow turning in the opposite direction, a real case of seeing is not believing, but, anyway, wind and downpour combining into a storm you could hope would allay possibilities of dreaded water rationing, yay, rain, rain, stay, stay, that was you intoning a sort of mantra over the deep, bendy, boulder creek bed near Arroyo-Vista intersect, it's okay, no one knew you mantra'd every time, weather dicey or placid, to damn dry skies and bless a borning stream you hoped to hear this time but not becoming lordy. No, no, no aloof pasha here, just simple you lipping -- rain, rain, stay, stay, keep us irrigate another day.

SPC POETRY CONTEST – DEADLINE IS JULY 15, 2009

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

\$3 a poem, no limit on the number of poems!

Submit to: spc poetry contest, 1719 25th St., SAC, CA 95816

.....



SPC members now receive a special 10% discount on

all UC Davis Extension writing courses! SPC members must self-identify for the discount when enrolling to be applied. Discounts are not available when enrolling and paying online; we recommend that SPC members enroll by phone at (800) 752-0881. Discount cannot be applied for after enrollment.

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.

Editor: Frank Dixon Graham

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Interview Editor: Lisa Jones

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Design Editor: Henry Chen

Interviews: Dorine Jennette

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

Bob Stanley, President

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Contact the Poetry Center at 1719 - 25th Street, Sacramento CA 95816

bobstanley@sbcglobal.net

916-979-9706

Or visit our website at www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org



Jesse Collins is a Northern California native, raised in Antioch, and now lives in Elk Grove with his wife and two young sons. He is a graduate of CSUS, where he received a BA in Communications/Journalism.

OPEN FIELD TACKLE

By Jesse Collins

I thought I saw you on the news last night,
a man with that same grey buzz-cut as you,

and that way your head kind of squares at the top,
also, he was big, a big polar bear like you,

with your same early cane, and that jacket,
gabardine, with the loop below the collar.

Maybe not though, it was old grainy footage,
the way old news and old football games look,

though it *had* to be you;
you were hugging a woman?

And for a moment to view your face was exposed
when you turned a bit to kiss her on the forehead,

but maybe I saw it wrong, it was really old footage,
probably from three or four years ago,

a montage piece of parents sad and grieving,
having just lost their child in the war. Was that you?

Another poem by Francisco X. Alarcón

Gracia	Grace
<i>a René Castro</i>	<i>to René Castro</i>

la desgracia	disgrace
nos concedió	conferred us
la gracia	the grace

de encontrar	of finding
en amargura	in bitterness
la ternura	the tenderness

de ser ya	of being no
no lágrima	longer a tear
sino sonrisa	but a smile

On the cover:
Poets and MC/Hosts, Lawrence Dinkins, Jr., Mario Ellis Hill, Vincent Kobelt

- 3rd Fridays

The Vox Poetry Reading Series, 1931 H Street, JULY event benefits MADD.

Saturday, July 18

- 3rd Saturdays

10am Writers of the New Sun/Escritores del Nuevo Sol have a new meeting date: the 3rd Saturday of each month. The 10 AM potluck meetings are at La Raza Galeria Posada, 1024 – 22nd St., midtown Sacramento. Call ahead to confirm: 916-456-5323. Members of all skill levels support each other via readings, exercises, critiques and information, writing in

English, Spanish, or both. w/open mic.

- 3rd and 4th Saturdays

8:00 pm to 10:30 pm and every third and fourth Friday- Blackout Poetry Series w/open mic. Located @ 26 Massie Ct., Sacramento,

CA 95823 (916) 681-2555. Cost \$5

- 3rd Saturdays

7pm, Celebration of Word, Sound and Paint.

Carol's Books, 1913 Del Paso.

- Certain 3rd Saturdays

Underground Poetry at the Underground Bookstore in Oak Park. 2814 35th St. -- Features and Open Mic. 916.737.333 for info

Sunday, July 19

7pm **Jose, Joe & Tomas Montoya Time Tested Books, 21st between K and L streets.** 1114 21st timetestedbooks.net

3rd Sun Poetry Workshop – meets at various places. Contact Rebecca Morrison or Nancy for details.

Monday, July 20

[Rebecca]: Hot Poetry in the Park with Poetry and Music by Litany <

Miles Miniaci, Bob Wilson, and Chene Watson plus special guests. Fremont

Park, Downtown Sac, between 15th and 16th and between P and Q, 7:30 PM

July 25, 2009

- Last Saturdays

The Show--poetry readings, hosted by Terry Moore. 7pm to 9pm featuring poets, comedians, singers and an open mic, 2863 35TH STREET (OFF 35TH & BROADWAY). Cost \$5

Monday, July 27, 7:30pm at SPC HQ 1719 25th St. [Tim Kahl hosts]: Shawn Pittard and Laverne Frith

The Poetry Wave

The Net:

There are many people promoting poetry in the Sacramento region. One such standout couple is Richard and Rachel Hansen. They promote the art in their local bookstore, The Bookcollector Bookstore, on 24th between J and K streets. They have a superb selection of chapbooks and books, locally published, by local authors, on their shelves. The store

hosts the long running Rattlesnake Readings (with publisher Kathy Kieth) and occasionally mixes more than one poetry reading in a month. The Hansen effort produces tiny books of poems through their small press. Richard Hansen is also a long time Poetry Center supporter through his volunteerism and other activities. Visit their websites at <http://www.sacfreepress.com/>

and <http://www.poems-for-all.com/> -- a collection of these little press efforts may be found at these sites.

New Books:

Blue Sky Flies Out is Danyen Powell's second book of poems. Rattlesnake Press published his first chapbook, *Anvil*, in their first publishing effort. Now, they give us a wonderful new collection of Danyen's work. Danyen facilitates the Tuesday Night SPC Workshops held at the Hart Senior Center on the corner of 27th and J streets. Be sure to pick up his book soon!

Crawdad Nelson's book, *Big Drink*, published by the Hansen group, is being sold and read at local readings by the author himself. The book is also available at the Bookcollector Bookstore. Check your calendar for Crawdad's readings about town.

Bob Stanley's chapbook, *Walt Whitman Orders a Cheeseburger*, was released on Wednesday, June 10, by Rattlesnake Press. Stanley is the newly selected Poet Laureate of Sacramento and the President of the Sacramento Poetry Center.

Venue:

Mahogany Poetry Series – An excellent Wednesday night venue. It begins a bit late, at 9pm or later., But you'll want to arrive early to order from the menu of Ethiopian delights at Queen Sheeba Restaurant, 1704 Broadway in Sacramento. If you like spoken word poetry and music with a beat, an R&B or slow-funk-jazz blend, this is the best place to be. DJ Rock Bottom spins before the open mikers hit the stage. Features are often included and the event is low cost.

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*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *Poetry Now*, and *Medusa's Kitchen*.

PARTING SHOT

By Matt Veazey

That last shot you took
There on your sacred grounds
Was really quite stunning
It's the shots you take when you know you shouldn't
That are often the most spectacular
You raise up involuntarily
Get out in front
Now pull
A natural response
At once elegant and foolish
Momentum past a certain point
You can't stop if you want to

You hit the mark this time
A wood duck
Most resplendent and adorned
Out of season
Irresistible against the orange morning sky
You know instantly
When the neck drops
And the wings fold simply, finally
Death in motion
Senseless and exciting
Against the odds
Under extreme circumstances
Your prey tumbled from the sky
And fell far afield
Way off on the levy bank
Irretrievable

Ann Privateer is a poet, photographer, and retired school teacher who grew up in Cleveland, Ohio but has lived in northern California most of her life. Her poems have appeared in *Manzanita*, *Poetry and Prose of the Mother Lode and Sierra*, *The Arts of the Sierra & Sacramento Region*, *Poetalk*, *Sex in Public*, *Tiger's Eye*, *Steele*, and *The Sacramento Anthology: One Hundred Poems*

PERFECT STORM

By Matt Veazey

Unlike her
Wooden cousin
The steel
Boat doesn't
Creak she
Moans when
Pressed by
The elements
She spoons
And bounces
And shudders
And wallows
Taking all
The wind
And sea
Will offer

Stuart Livingston Canton, using the pen name, SLiC, is a SacTown poet who writes to capture the sound of a trumpet drifting from a garage on I St. He has been published by the Rattlesnake Press and his poetry can be found at The Book Collector and Luna's Cafe.

WORKING

By SLiC
(Stuart Livingston Canton)
Fold
Fold
find her size
and fold
fit his waist
and fold
learn the trade
but fold
don't screw it up
just fold
wait for hours
to fold
Fold
Fold

SAY SOMETHING SACRILEGIOUS

By Ann Privateer

something with a guttural sound,
words to tantalize, don't anticipate
the next line, tell me something
no one else knows, lie if you must,
make it up as you go, when you get
my attention, we'll go back to your place,
spend the rest of our rest getting to know
the contours of the night, the ambling arc
of each horizontal toe from the floor up,
get to know more than we know, less
than will be relevant tomorrow, whisper
something sacrilegious loudly in my ear.

**BOB STANLEY
AND JOHN ALLEN CANN
READ JULY 6 AT SPC!**

Scott V. Young is a part time teacher, writer and actor. More of his poetry can be seen in *Yuba Flows*, from Hip Pocket Press. He is enrolled in the MFA program in Fiction at Pacific University. Along with his three delightful children, he lives in an unfinished house by a creek just north of Nevada City, California, where he gardens a little and sometimes stops to look at birds.

SANDWICH

By Scott V. Young

I am hungry and for a while harbor elaborate plans involving potatoes, olive oil and garlic, but I have too many things to do, laundry, an essay, the leak in the roof so I settle for a hunk of bread, leftover from buying soup yesterday, take a bite, then think 'Do I have time for mustard?' In the fridge, I made it with a coffee grinder just the other day, and spreading it takes up almost no time feels virtuous, healthy, except that even I know a mustard sandwich is pathetic. Hold on - there is cheese, firm, white, flaky which I also made three days ago and which took longer than mustard – where did I find the time? – and there is the red bell pepper so that soon I have a real sandwich, legitimate and I am not pacing alone in an unfinished house looking out the dirty windows, no, I am a man with a sandwich, having lunch (it's 11am, I say to myself, and this is breakfast) except even eating a sandwich is not enough by itself, I cannot sit down when so much needs to be done especially not with dry bread, a beer would be easy if it weren't too early and winter besides, with the house not heated up yet so coffee is the obvious choice but that's a fuckin' project, water and filters and grinding up beans, and by the time I had a cup in hand my sandwich would be long gone anyway so I stick with the pacing, start writing this poem in my head and pitying the fish in their dirty aquarium and wishing I had time to do a crossword puzzle until I realize no one is home and I could jack off and for just a minute or two, after, I drift in a place that is not memory and not forgetting, not the water and not the glass, a place where one day I make cheese and mustard from scratch and the next agonize over a sandwich, where one day I might adopt a war orphan and the next I can't even write a poem, where one day the coffee waits and the next day it doesn't.

Rebecca J. Foust's book *Dark Card* won the 2007 Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Award. A second chapbook, *Mom's Canoe*, won the 2008 Phillips Prize and her full length collection was a short listed for the 2008 *Crab Orchard Review* Book Prize and *Poetry's* 2007 Emily Dickinson First Book Award. She has about 150 poems in print in recent issues of *JAMA*, *Margie*, *North Atlantic Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and others; two received 2008 Pushcart Prize nominations. "Crickets at Lakemont Park" was first published in *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

CRICKETS AT LAKEMONT PARK

By Rebecca J. Foust

The crickets are sounding a catastrophe outside my window, reminding me of the painted tin clickers whose tongues

we'd arc and release, consolation prizes for the perennially rigged ring toss, that huge stuffed Orangutan getting more

moth-eaten every year, smell of sweat and hot axel grease, gear eating gear when the paint-peeling roly coaster creaked

its way up and plunged past the carousel, the real crickets' jig-chorus racket in the long-limbed grass where we spread

our thin blanket. Then the carnival light and crackle would fade, then I'd arc and release again and again. Your hands,

your tongue, the cricket-sung, grass-sweet dark.

RECORDINGS:

Missed a recent SPC reading or poetry happening around town? Visit our archives of these recorded events at:

<http://sacramentopoetrycenter.org/recordings.htm>

**July 2009
Literary Events**

MONDAY -- June 29 Frank Graham hosts (at SPC) : Dorine Jennette and Valerie Fioravanti

Wednesday July 1

- *And Every Wednesday* 5pm Dr. Andy's Technology and Poetry Hour on KDVS radio station 90.3 FM, <http://www.kdvs.org>

- *Every Wednesday,* 9:00pm Mahogany Poetry Series night at Queen Sheba restaurant @ 1704 Broadway, with Khiry Malik M., open mic.

- *1st and 3rd Wednesdays* The Bistro, 3rd and F Streets in Davis, Free. 530.756.4556 aojones@ucdavis.edu www.bistro33.com/bistro33_davis for schedule

Thursday, July 2

- *Every Thurs* 8pm, Open Mic and featured poet at Lunas Café -- Feature TBA 16th Street between O and P streets, Geoff Neil, Mario Ellis Hill, frank andrick and B.L. Kennedy host.

Saturday, July 4

RNR, Rhythm and Rhyme readings at Butch N' Nellies near 19th and I street. Televised. With music and open mic. myspace.com/RNRshow

Monday, July 6

- *Every Monday*

SPC President Bob Stanley and John Allen Cann read at SPC 1719 25th St. Tuesday, July 7

- *Every Tuesday:*

7:30pm SPC Poets' Workshop @ the Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 FREE bring 13 copies of your one page poem to be read/critiqued.

- *Every Tuesday* 7:00 p.m. - "Life Sentence" poetry reading and open mic. The Coffee Garden, 2904 Franklin Blvd., Sac. <http://www.myspace.com/lifesentence> show

Wednesday, July 8

- *Wednesdays)* 5pm Dr. Andy's Technology and Poetry Hour on KDVS radio station 90.3 FM, <http://www.kdvs.org>

- *2nd Wednesdays (in hibernation for summer until August)*

NO READING IN JULY Rattlesnake Reading at the BookCollector Bookstore between J and K on 24th Street. Kathy Kieth hosts. Check Medusa's Kitchen blog for details -- back on **Weds., August 12** to celebrate **Joyce Odam's** birthday month and book release.

- *Every Wednesday,* 9:00pm Mahogany Poetry Series night at Queen Sheba restaurant @ 1704 Broadway, with Khiry Malik M., open mic.

Thursday, July 9

- *Every Thurs* 8pm, Open Mic and featured poet at Lunas Café -- Feature TBA 16th Street between O and P streets, Geoff Neil, Mario Ellis Hill, frank andrick and B.L. Kennedy host.

Saturday, July 11

- *2nd and 4th Saturdays*

10-11:15 am; SPC Poetry Workshops in Natomas. 2921 Truxel Rd. at the South Natomas Community Center, grahampoet@aol.com

Sunday, July 12

2nd Sundays

11-1pm, meeting of El Camino Poets bring 8 copies of your poems for critique. Hosted by Carol Louise Moon at the Hart Senior Center, 27th and J streets in Sac

Monday, July 13

- *Every Monday*

SPC readings at SPC. Enjoy the MidMo Art Gallery in the same location. 1719 25th St – between Q and R streets.

Tuesday, July 14

- *Every Tuesday:* 7:30pm SPC Poets' Workshop @ the Hart Cntr, 27th/J sts. Danyen@ 530-756-6228 FREE bring 13 copies of your one page poem to be read/critiqued

Wednesday, July 15

Every 3rd Wednesday 7pm, Free. Poetry Nite. Open Mike. El Dorado Hills. For additional details at Our House Gallery at (916) **933-4278** (4ART) for info.

- *Every Wednesday,* 9:00pm Mahogany Poetry Series night at Queen Sheba restaurant @ 1704 Broadway, with Khiry Malik M., open mic.

- *1st and 3rd Wednesdays* The Bistro, 3rd and F Streets in Davis, Free. 530.756.4556 aojones@ucdavis.edu www.bistro33.com/bistro33_davis for schedule

LUNA's open mike, every Thursday!

Friday, July 17

**Sacramento Area Recurring
Literary Events**

.....
 • *Sundays*
 11-1pm, meeting of El Camino Poets bring 8 copies of your poems for critique. Hosted by Carol Louise Moon at the Hart Senior Center, 27th and J streets in Sac.

.....
 • *3rd Sundays*
 3rd Sun Poetry Workshop – meets at various places. Contact Rebecca Morrison or Nancy for details.

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 • *Every Monday*
 SPC readings at SPC HQ, also, enjoy the MidMo Art Gallery in the same location 1719 25th St – between Q and R streets – where the best poets come to read!

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aojones@ucdavis.edu
www.bistro33.com/bistro33_davis for schedule

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 • *2nd Wednesdays (usually)*
 Rattlesnake Readings at the BookCollector Bookstore between J and K on 24th Street. Kathy Kieth hosts. Check Medusa's Kitchen blog for details.

.....
 • *Every Thurs* 8pm,
 Open Mic and featured poet at Lunas Café -- Feature TBA 16th Street between O and P streets.

.....
 • *Some Fridays –*
 Galleria Posada Featured Poets - 1024 22nd St. Sac. In Spanish and sometimes English 916.456.5323 916.446.5133
www.larazagaleriesposada.org

.....
 • *3rd Fridays*
 The Vox Poetry Reading Series, 1931 H Street, Several featured poets in one evening. Hosted by Cynthia Linville. Clinville@csus.edu for details

.....
 • *Certain Fridays (closed for summer months)*
 The Other Voice, held at the Unitarian Church in Davis, Featured poets Hosted by Allegra Silberstein.

.....
 • *First Saturdays*
 RNR, Rhythm and Rhyme readings at Butch N' Nellies near 19th and I street. Televised. With music and open mic. myspace.com/RNRshow

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 • *2nd and 4th Saturdays*
 10-11:15 am; SPC Poetry Workshops in Natomas. 2921 Truxel Rd. at the South Natomas Community Center, grahampoe@aol.com

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 • *3rd Saturdays*
 10am Writers of the New

Sun/Escritores del Nuevo Sol have a new meeting date: the 3rd Saturday of each month. The 10 AM potluck meetings are at La Raza Galeria Posada, 1024 – 22nd St., midtown Sacramento. Call ahead to confirm: 916-456-5323. Members of all skill levels support each other via readings, exercises, critiques and information, writing in English, Spanish, or both. w/open mic.

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 7pm, Celebration of Word, Sound and Paint.
 Carol's Books, 1913 Del Paso.

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 The Show--poetry readings, hosted by Terry Moore. 7pm to 9pm featuring poets, comedians, singers and an open mic, 2863 35TH STREET (OFF 35TH & BROADWAY). Cost \$5

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 • *Certain 3rd Saturdays*
 Underground Poetry at the Underground Bookstore in Oak Park. 2814 35th St. -- Features and Open Mic. 916.737.333 for info

**LIST YOUR POETRY EVENT:
(calendar in subject line)
grahampoe@aol.com**

Sacramento Area

Poems from Francisco X. Alarcón		Sangre en flor <i>a Víctor Jara</i>	Blood in Bloom <i>to Víctor Jara</i>	La palabra más allá de todas las palabras la palabra ejerce exacta su poder más allá de todo poder poniendo su fe en la poesía The Word the word beyond all words wields its exact power beyond any power altogether putting its faith in poetry
En la aduana	At Customs	la sangre derramada en el horror	the blood spilled amid the horror	
el mundo es mi patria	the world is my country	del terror marcial nunca se puede lavar	of martial terror can never be washed away	
el arco iris mi bandera	the rainbow my flag	se mete quieta por entre grietas de las canteras	it quietly creeps into the cracks between stones	
semillas de cacao mis monedas	cacao seeds my coins	penetra como ácido muros de hormigón	it pierces like acid through concrete walls	
hojas de laurel mis billetes	laurel leaves my bills	la sangre de soñadores masacrados	the blood of massacred dreamers	
besos y abrazos	kisses and embraces	nadie ni nada la puede jamás borrar u olvidar–	nobody and nothing can ever erase or forget–	
caricias y recuerdos	caresses and remembrances	en las plazas de los pueblos y los balcones	on the <i>plazas</i> of towns and on balconies	
los anoto deligente	I diligently write them in	la podemos ver brotar así con la luz del sol	we can see it springing out with sunlight	
como únicos bienes de valor	as my only worthy goods	redimida para siempre como en flor	redeemed forever as in bloom	
en mi declaración de aduana	on my customs declaration			
al cruzar la frontera	when I cross the border			

"Awaken People Gently": An Interview with Hannah Stein

"Thirteen anal fin rays, / black gumline, lust. / Death-lust. // What forces the salmon / forces them to run . . ." So begins Hannah Stein's poem "Fish Sex" (available online in *Perihelion*). As these astonishing lines show, Stein's work is powerfully engaged with the natural world and its creatures, and that engagement takes her far beyond environmental platitudes, far beyond a feet-upon-the-porch observer's ease. As she noted during her recent reading at the UC Davis Arboretum, "That it is now fashionable to care about the earth is frightening in its implications. Stewardship of the earth should be a daily part of everyone's life." Stein's poems share her decades of investigation into human/other interaction, and also her sharp insights into this work of shaping personal experience into art. In poems like "How Music Prepares Us for the World," Stein's speaker becomes aware of how, watching musicians warm up for a performance, she is already shaping a poetic performance in her mind: "One woman sits reading on / the grass, I would like her to be reading / Chekhov." A frequent participant in the ekphrastic tradition of writing in/about/through paintings, Stein's love of the French Impressionist painters infuses her collection *Earthlight* (La Questa Press, 2000). Stein discusses paintings directly, but also places her speakers in painterly situations, considering their circumstances in terms of foreground, light, and texture; she sometimes gives a poem's speaker a painter's perspective on space, physical and emotional: "the trapezoid of sky // that opens / a way out of the picture, the consummation of the / struggle being the only way out of the struggle / we do not discover until we have passed through it."

Author of the chapbooks *Schools of Flying Fish* (State Street Press, 1990) and *Hannah Stein, Greatest Hits: 1981–2004* (Pudding House Publications, 2005), and the poetry collection *Earthlight* (La Questa Press, 2000), Hannah Stein is currently at work on a new collection. She is immersed in reading Eric Karpel's *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to In Search of Lost Time*, as well as August Kleinzahler's *Sleeping It Off in Rapid City: Poems, New and Selected*. We spoke in her study in her home in Davis.

Jennette: I want to start by asking you a little bit about your process for finding figurative connections, because I found some of your metaphors and similes especially striking. There's one . . . about a deer in the blackberry bushes—"its wide ears spoons for tasting danger"—that I loved when I heard you read it at the Arboretum. The literal connection is there—the ears and the spoons—but then that sensory blurring between seeing and hearing and tasting is so marvelous. My other favorite . . . is in "Loving a Mathematician," where there's this bit about pi emerging from under square roots "like / a wagonload of deviant potatoes." So spectacular! I can make the connection from root to potato once you make it . . . but it is such a leap, it's so surprising when I first encounter it . . . What's your metaphor composing process like?

Stein: Well, Dorine, I can't tell you how gratifying it is to me that you have chosen those two particular metaphors, because they each have a history . . . They each have a very negative history, which I persisted against and overcame, because those two metaphors came under severe criticism from people I really respect . . . Really funny . . . I can no longer say to one of those people "See? See?" but the other person is very available . . . I will definitely pass the word along!

. . .

Jennette: I also wanted to ask about your process of deciding how to seat an image within the larger structure of the poem; once you have that wonderful line about the deer's ears or the potatoes, how do you choose where the image goes? I was really struck by the structure of a poem like "Pact" in *Earthlight*, that begins, "But the angels don't need souls, / because they never needed to choose"—it's a metaphysical poem, it's a moral poem, but you ground it in these moments of the friends eating outside and rubbing their elbows because it's too cold, and the white deer that appear, and the person running . . . how do you arrange all those materials with the metaphysical bits to form that cohesive poem? How do you find a shape?

Stein: Well, I don't start it from the beginning at all. No. I really write . . . Things seem to be related. You know, if I were looking to write a metaphysical communication, I would write an essay. It's more or less letting the mind expand, really, and having faith, or trust, in the connections that one makes. All those things in that poem—they cover a lot of ground . . . That also has a story. I woke up with that line, "But the angels don't need souls," at 3 AM, and got out of bed and wrote the poem . . . That doesn't mean I wrote the poem that's in the book, but I got out of bed and wrote pages which eventually became that poem.

Jennette: Is that your usual habit? If you get a gift in the middle of the night, to actually get up and write it down?

Stein: I wish it were. I wish it were. No, that's very, very rare. Was it Randall Jarrell who said a poet stands out in the rain, hoping that four or five times in his life, lightning will strike? It was that sort of thing.

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Jennette: I was struck in *Earthlight* by the concern for space and structure. There are moments where you make these wonderful dizzying shifts in spatial perspective . . . In "Seeing Double," for example, the description of the staircase . . . there's a sense of a collapse of linearity into . . . all-connectedness. Is that something that's still a concern in the new work, the idea of all moments in time being connected, all moments in space?

Stein: In a way, I think inner and outer relation takes place more in terms of experience and thought, rather than time and space. That is the way I would say I've been experiencing it more recently. I have a poem coming out in *American Literary Review* about a concert where just that is happening . . . the experience of the performer as I imagine it is very much slicing between experiencing what appears outside and inside.

. . .

Jennette: Could you talk a little bit about your use of personal experience on the page?

Stein: Robert Frost said he always lied [to get at the truth], in poems, so there's a lot of that, but every poem has the germ of experience, or if not experience, of outlook. There's a lot of truth in the lies, too. The imagination does take over, I have to admit. How could it not?

Jennette: In Wallace Stevens's collection of essays *The Necessary Angel* . . . he borrows from Cezanne, and there's a bit about the poem not as a retelling of the poet's literal experience, but as a psychological landscape . . . Does that resonate for you?

Stein: Sure. One's book is a portrait of oneself, and yet, I think that I'm not just writing to express myself. It's a point of view, it's an outlook on the world, and the world has to be in the poems—in fact, it turns out that poems that are written as self-expression never make it very far . . . Shelley said that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, and Milton said a poet is a teacher. I don't presume to teach, really, but I do want to get at what I want other people to see about the world, to see what I see . . . It's not about me, but it's about what's out there from my point of view.

Jennette: Does that relate to the idea of using the poem as a means of advocacy and activism in an ecological sense?

Stein: In a way, and not only ecological, but political, if you will . . . I have very strong feelings about how that does not work, as well as trying very hard to make it work.

Jennette: Please share! I'm very curious.

Stein: Well, I mean harangues are the most boring things in the world, and there's a lot of poetry out there—or "poetry"—that is mostly harangue, and it's not going to get anybody to change. I think we have to awaken people gently, and just get them to see in a slightly different way, and maybe that will register . . . I mean, what *does* have an effect on the world? Maybe poetry might, but you have to be very delicate. I think it's possible to shock, and for that to awaken people, but you have to do it in a way which is artful, not heavy . . . I do feel very strongly about the place of political poetry and the necessity of treading very lightly and reaching people through feeling, rather than necessarily intellect.

. . .

In the introduction to her *Greatest Hits*, Stein describes her poetic project this way: "My work is about the resolve to get close to experience's bone and flesh while keeping hold of its spirit. On one side is the self that loves and suffers, while on the other I remain a watcher, trying to refine understanding. I find my way out of isolation through the painful, ecstatic breach where the world collides with the self that's always searching. I am deeply moved by the human refusal to give up joy, love, compassion, or the sense of beauty, in face of a blight one must confront without sentimentality. Reaching beyond the prison of consciousness to connect with other souls, my desire is to resolve in poetry the wrenching clash between imagination and reality, between self and world."

Dorine Jennette

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Dr. Jennette reads at SPC on June 29 with Valerie Fioravanti