

POETRY NOW

MAY-JUNE 2010

Free | Interview with Matthew Zapruder | Dorine Jenette's *Urchin to Follow*



**The Annual
SPC Writing
Conference
was held
April 17**

Workshops with Tim Kahl, Indigo Moor, Peter Grandbois, Toni Mirosevich, Joseph Lease, the folks from FlatmanCrooked, and Donna de la Perriere presented new ideas for entering a poem, incorporating difficult material, and publishing. Let's not forget the music at the event's end featuring Lawrence Dinkins and Ross Hammond. It was a full day of writing and learning, and we look forward to next year's writing conference.

Indigo Moor's morning workshop (top); SPC President Bob Stanley staffs the table at morning sign in (inset); Peter Grandbois' morning workshop (bottom left) and Toni Mirosevich's afternoon workshop.

featuring

DONALD R.
ANDERSON

MARY BETH
ASARO

LYTTON
BELL

MIKE
BERGER

MARTHA ANN
BLACKMAN

DIANNA
HENNING

LOWELL
JAEGER

KELLY
KAMISKY

ELIZABETH
KRAUSE

LAURA
LEHEW

ROBERT
LIETZ

LYN
LIFSHIN

DONNA MARIE
MILLER

BZ
NIDITCH

SIMON
PERCHIK

ANN
PRIVATEER

MARIE J.
ROSS

POETRY NOW

POETRY NOW, the Sacramento region's literary review and calendar, is published by the Sacramento Poetry Center (SPC), 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 may also appear on the SPC website.

POEM SUBMISSIONS

Submit poems and a 30-50 word bio to Cynthia Linville: clinville@csus.edu. Electronic submissions preferred. Submissions may be mailed. Send with an SASE to address below.

DISTRIBUTION

POETRY NOW is distributed in area bookshops, Sacramento City and 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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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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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



BOB STANLEY

Join poets of Sacramento to raise funds at **Aid for Haiti** on May 15th. Thanks to Loretta and Dennis Schmitz and the Partners in Health (PIH) organization, we're hoping to fill up the Newman Center on a Saturday night and support the good work that PIH is doing in Haiti. We're asking for a \$25 donation per person, and I think this could be the biggest fundraiser that the local literary community has ever done. Music—Poetry—Solidarity—let's do the best we can! See SPC website for details, too.



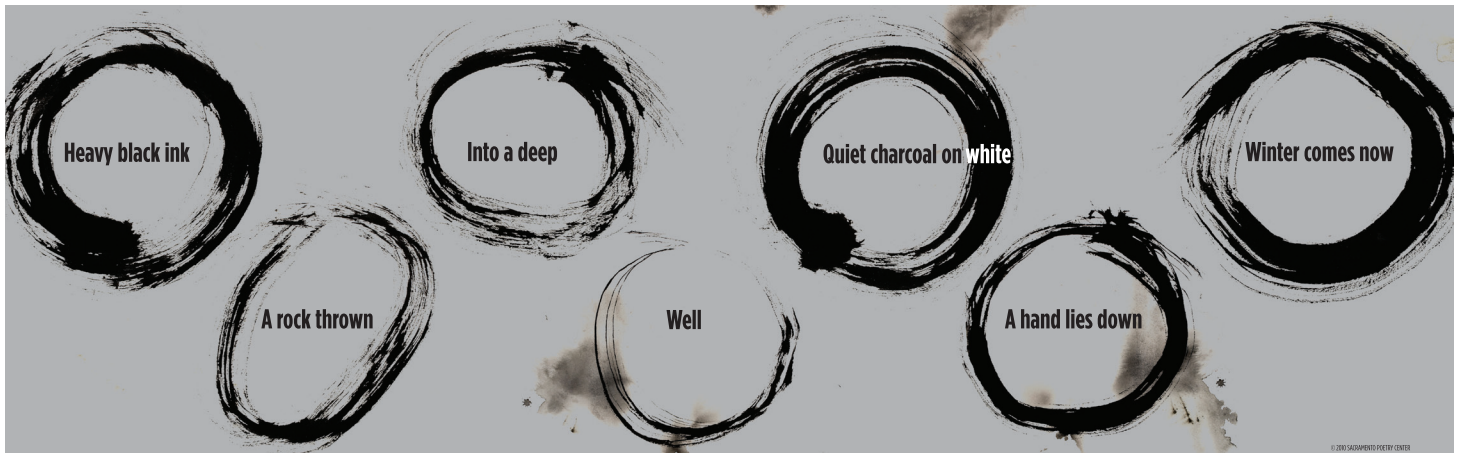
Poetry Month has been a blur so far, (I'm writing this on April 12th) and as always, there are events all over town. I had the pleasure of reading at the **Poetry Club of Lincoln** yesterday and found a huge group of friendly and accomplished writers at Lincoln's beautiful new library on a rainy Sunday. Forty people attended, and over twenty read for open mic! The poetry ranged from melancholy to hilarious, good spirits, good cookies, and good verse of all shapes and sizes! I'm grateful to Sue Clark for the invitation and recommend the trip up Highway 65. Enter the Poets of Lincoln contest, too—it's not limited to residents of the town. Information's available at www.libraryatlincoln.org.

Since *Poetry Now* is now a two-month issue, I have to remember what's going on in June as well. The **R25 Festival** is scheduled for June 5 and 6—check our website for details—we'll have music, poetry, art, and food in the "courtyard." Saturday 12 to 9, Sunday 12 to 5. And Ray Tatar's art auction begins Sunday at 5. It's a free celebration of the wide range of arts and cultural organizations at the R25 Center—Alliance Française de Sacramento, California Stage, Matrix Arts, and of course SPC. Come down and see what's going on for an hour or so, you might decide to stick around.

Another event—call it my "pick of the month," that you might want to check out is on Saturday, June 12—It's the "**Ten Most Wanted**" poetry night—ten performers at Carol's Books that night including Terry Moore, comedian Patrick Jaye, and NSAA. Sample some of the best spoken word around on a hot June night in Sacramento!

SPC has now been at 25th and R Streets now for over five years, and it sure has gone fast. Those Monday night readings seem to flow together like moonlight on water. Just think how many clichés I can generate in the next five years! Thanks to all for helping to make poetry happen at all the venues and avenues in Sacramento—forgive me for saying this is one hot poetry town .

Bob



SPC SACRAMENTOPOETRYCENTER.ORG 25TH & R STREETS 

UC DAVIS
EXTENSION
CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

POET: VIOLA WEINBERG
ARTIST: MARIO URIBE
DESIGN: RICHARD HANSEN
POE-10-100



Poets on Board

A new SPC project puts poetry on the road

The Sacramento region now has poetry out on the road—inside Regional Transit’s fleet of buses. Inspired by programs in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, The Sacramento Poetry Center, working with RT Metro and with generous support from UC Davis Extension, has launched “Poets On Board.”

Hundreds of cardboard placards, which measure 11 x 28 inches, have been installed on RT’s fleet of buses, where ads usually go.

The placard (pictured above) was designed by Richard Hansen and features an excerpt from poet Viola Weinberg’s poem “Enso,” with art provided by Mario Uribe. Weinberg was the Sacramento poet laureate in 2001.

Bob Stanley, the current Sacramento poet laureate, helped develop the “Poets on Board” program. He hopes that the poems will provide a small respite from the ordinary for local bus riders. “I’ve heard so many stories from people who were moved by poems they saw on buses from other cities,” Stanley says. We’re grate-

ful that RT Metro is willing to support the arts and give riders a chance to reflect on something different.”

The Poetry Center plans to continue the program with new placards featuring other artists and poets.

On Monday, May 3rd at 7:30pm, SPC will host a special event to honor RT’s installation of these first Poets on Board placards. Weinberg and Uribe will be talking about their project that produced the poem and artwork.

There will also be a limited edition offering—signed copies of the full-size bus placards will be available on that date. Sales of the limited edition version will help fund future bus placards planned as part of the Poets on Board program.

Discounts on UC Davis Extension writing courses

SPC members now receive a special 10% discount on all UC Davis Extension writing courses! For more information, go to the SPC website and check on their link. Or call (800) 752-0881.



HIRSCHMAN FILM PREMIERES IN SACRAMENTO

The documentary *Red Poet: The Story of Jack Hirschman* had its U.S. premiere on April 21st as part of the Sacramento International Film Festival. Jack Hirschman, pictured above reading from his Italian published magnum opus *The Arcanes*, gave a reading after the screening. Hirschman served as the poet laureate of San Francisco from 2006-2009 and is now the San Francisco Public Library poet-in-residence.

Sacramento Poetry Center board member Rebecca Morrison was credited for making the *Red Poet* screening and Hirschman’s reading in Sacramento possible.

The Tomales Bay Workshops

University of California,
Davis Creative Writing Program
October 27-31, 2010

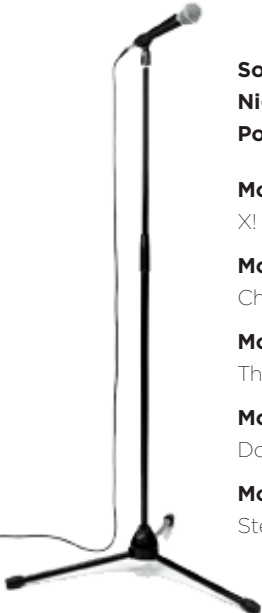
Keynote Speaker: Terry Tempest Williams

SPC members get \$150 off

The Tomales Bay Workshops bring aspiring writers into close community with nationally known poets, writers, respected editors and agents. Workshops limited to 12 participants ensure an intimate setting. In addition, participants have the opportunity to purchase one-on-one consultations with publishing professionals.

The workshops are held at the Marconi Conference Center in Marshall, California, on the eastern shore of pristine Tomales Bay, just north of San Francisco in Marin County. The Marconi Center sits on a wooded hillside that overlooks serene water and mountains beyond. The center offers comfortable rooms, excellent food and inviting hiking trails. Come to relax, learn and explore.

Tuition: \$1,550 (includes the \$150 application fee). Space is limited, so please apply as early as possible. The deadline is August 1, 2010 or until full. www.extension.ucdavis.edu/tomalesbay



Some of the upcoming Monday Night readings hosted by the Poetry Center

Monday, May 10

X! Sac City Ethnic Theater

Monday, May 24

Christopher Buckley, C. E. Chaffin

Monday, May 31

The Poetry Bomb with S.A. Griffin

Monday, June 7

Doug Rice, Catie Rosemurgy

Monday, June 28

Stephen Kessler, Alexa Mergen

See the SPC website for more details

Scythe Press Chapbook

Contest is accepting submissions through June 1, 2010. For full details go to www.swanscythe.com

■■■

Valerie Fioravanti's

Stories on Stage will be Friday, May 21st (instead of the usual last Friday of the month). Check out this popular fiction reading event which takes place at the Poetry Center.

■■■

New Voices Writing

Classes Free Summer Poetry Workshops beginning in May and June in Sacramento and Rancho Cordova. For information, or to pre-register, contact bobstanley@sbcglobal.net

■■■

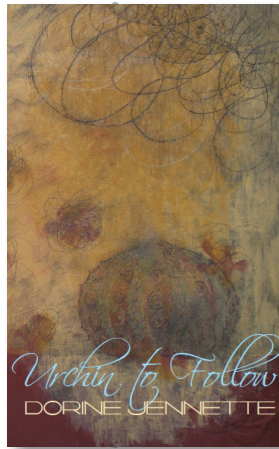
Aid for Haiti

Help raise funds for Partners in Health, and their work in Haiti. 7pm, Saturday, May 15th at The Newman Center 5900 Newman Court (Right across J Street from CSUS.) Lecture by Haiti activist Larry Castagnola. Poetry by Dennis Schmitz and many more. Music by Patrick Grizzell and Junkyard Burlesque. \$25 Donation requested, but all donations are welcome.



DORINE JENNETTE'S URCHIN TO FOLLOW

It's time to celebrate another great poet in our midst. Dorine Jennette moved to Davis two years ago and has been active in the Sacramento poetry scene since. With both an MFA and a PhD in English, Dorine Jennette came to us as a highly overqualified interviewer for *Poetry Now*. Her book *Urchin to Follow* was just made available on Amazon.com by The National Poetry Review Press. Having read most of the poems already, I heartily agree with Chris Forhan, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Connie Voisine's praise. She really does turn "a startling phrase," making cleverness and wit into something elegant, dynamic, and delicious.



More about Jennette's work may be found at www.dorinejennette.com.

PRAISE FROM JUDITH ORTIZ COFER:

... *The whole book exudes a love of language and a playful intelligence, reminiscent of the work of William Matthews and Heather McHugh, both masters of syntactical twists and startling turns of phrase. Dorine Jennette's poems have the ability to take us out of ourselves, rendering the ordinary world intricate and interesting again...*

The Sacramento Poem

The Sacramento Poem is a book-length renga that will be comprised of five-line samples from a multitude of contributors and other found sources. ■ The samples will be edited into a form to be determined by the nature of the contributed work. ■ All contributors will be recognized by having their name appear in an appendix which will identify which section of the poem their contribution appeared in. ■ All 5-line samples should make direct and specific reference to an element of life in Sacramento. However, contributors need not live in the region in order to submit. ■ The book will be published by SPC Press in 2011. ■ **Deadline Dec 1, 2011** ■ Please submit all five-line samples to Tim Kahl at tnklbny@mongryl.com

POEMS BY DORINE JENNETTE

NARRATIVE

The back porch is no place to look for relief.
I never trust the new spring sun, nor bees,
those local drunks, buzzes guttering like the engine

of a rusty fishing boat full throttle
for a beer at The Rotten Mullet,
“Hammer Dan” at the tiller cursing

for lack of a decent bilge pump—
the bees, to which I am so allergic,
remind me periodically

that only trouble is interesting, which may be why
bees give directions by dance. It’s breezy here
despite the bees’ reminder that I carry this big needle

for a reason, last seen in Cochise Stronghold, AZ.
The name’s a clue that there’s been trouble there.
Up at four, we’d stumble into yuccas on our way

to our packs, and briefly curse, inhaling bagels
as we hiked to climb the crags,
then early call it quits and spend the late day

drinking beer and eating spicy chips, playing cards
and listening to somebody not bad on the guitar.
In this, we resembled young narratives,

whose long legs sprawl backward and forward,
teenagers who colonize a couch,
leaving big kicked-off shoes to linger in the mind.

Tied in at the third belay, I reached to scratch my back
and caught a stinger in my thumb
for an allergic person’s etymological thrill:

anaphylaxis binds the roots of up, back, again and guard—
by which we learn the body is a bureaucrat commanding
a war, who orders a charge and retreat at once,

so that its parts attack each other in passing.
Since the needle’s a spring-loaded kit,
one stab in the thigh does the job,

and, suffocation averted, we had
our biggest trouble with a twin-spotted rattlesnake
coiled under the ends of our ropes.

Whereas, this afternoon from my backyard
where my fat cat tramples the pansies,
I’ve risked only a quick stick

and a sweaty race to the hospital,
plus injections with soporific drugs
that would have caused me to take a nap

during which I might have dreamt of other things,
such as touring Rome as a roadie
and leaping into the driver’s seat of a no-brakes

band bus down a cobbled hill gaining on three children
(two girls and a boy) on bicycles. Avanti!
As you see, I might have lost this train of thought.

There are worse ways to spend an afternoon
than perched on the porch daydreaming narrative poems.
So many fights I could have started

with the people I love, given these few hours.
Yes, I’m sure there’s some lame wreckage
I could have made which would even now

be limping along on its assorted twigs,
shambling, with the shattered ends
of its hands in its mouth, down the street.

EVENING

Winter wheat sleeps in sheaves.
The fur on all the animals is licked
in the same direction. Thin
in their gowns of ice, the lindens.
A plank for every adze.
Steam gathers shadows on the sill
and each grape sees itself in a glass.
Preserves.

Every Mother

... is a working mother, says
the bumper sticker
on the battered mini-van
in the SuperMart
parking lot. One axel
propped on jackstands.
A greasy man in coveralls
beneath the van, yelling
Try it again.
Try it again.
She's at the wheel
twisting the ignition
when he commands.
Behind her, an infant
whimpers, till Mom stretches
to fetch his fallen toy.
In a side window
a two-year-old slaps flies
with his bare hands,
while the oldest sibling slams
open and closed
the van's sliding door.
Try it again, the man shouts
like he's peeved at her
when his machine won't go.
He adds a string of curses,
drops his wrench, and she's on the spot
with a wad of Kleenex
to nurse his torn knuckles.
Now she's got the rear loading-doors
open, worried about the groceries.
Hands each kid
a popsicle, tells them to eat fast.
She's unloading all that might go bad
in this heat, especially the hamburger,
frozen chicken strips, and ice cream.
Try it again,
comes the call. The oldest
escapes out the sliding door
to the pave.
Try it again.
Don't you dare, she says,
nabs the kid by the t-shirt,
and mops blue popsicle
off his chin.
Try it again! Twice as loud
this time. She slips instantly
behind the wheel.
The ice cream leaks through
its carton, drips to the asphalt,
a puddle of ooze.

—By Lowell Jaeger

My face washed away in the rain.

Down the street near the corner drain
crumpled papier-mâché floats.
A mask perhaps. I was always a mask,
refuge taken behind a hill,
a tree, a glass of wine. And my face
stretched with time—nearly plastic.

Flesh loves its structure,
how a thing cleaves to hold on.
Like the gutter's herringbone tweed of car oil
that slicks my washed-away mask
in order to keep some semblance
of what it once was.

O the asphyxiation of perfection,
its fetid stench, how it grooms the future.

—By Dianna Henning

GONE, LIKE THE YEARS SINCE THE MOON LANDING

By Lyn Lifshin

but in a breath. It was there,
in a file. A handful, letters,
a note from me in a different
life. "Man with accent
called, will call back later."
Fatimi. My pink sweater,
the same one in a sorority
gig. How I dropped everything
from a college weekend
with him that night. For years
I kept it. The folder was
right there. Gone as his dark
black hair of course must be.
He was older. My mother,
terrified I'd end up in the white
slave market sent my uncle
to check. Gone like those
words, though Goggle says he is
in a small rich suburb,
a most distinguished career.

SONG OF BIRDS

By BZ Niditch

Eight song of birds
on the old oak
echoes a "May I" memory.

SWEET ROOF RAIN AND ALL THAT COMES WITH IT

By Dianna Henning

There was a table-cloth of fog
for the rain to set its drink down upon.

There was a party of tapping fingers,
and the seamless gutter's overflow—

gorged rivers carrying with them
snap-easy trees, sopped-out roots.

There was a meeting of gods on the roof
where they ate ears of sweet shucked rain.

"Good," they said, "this skyfull of plenty,"
and went on pounding their drums

while I remained sopped in the cold chill of my times;
the egregious progress of destruction.

MOUNT FUJI

By Kelly Kamisky

Cool air surrounded us like whispers,
the day shrugged off darkness.
We, back-packed and heart full,
ascended towards the sky.
At the seventh station, I stopped.
Tea fields
spread across the ground—
mazes of thick green stretched so far
I squinted my eyes to look for the end.
Clouds touched my feet
white apparitions that floated and disappeared
as we climbed, higher and higher.
The earth below sloped and dipped.
I saw deep scars pressed into the side of this giant-
channels for its tears.
The land began to spin,
my body began to sway,
I had to close my eyes.
Climbers whispered “Gambate!”
(Go for it!)
I swallowed their words,
sweet life breath
pushing me on my path.
So many wanderers on this mountain,
so many wonderers
rising like suns into the sky.
When we finally reached the top,
soaring above the world,
I raised my hands high above my head —
a salute.

MOOD MUSIC

By Marie J. Ross

Moon is high
ebbs of mood music
undulating through
swaying palms.
Drums thump,
pounding
like erotic heart beats.
The view;
two lovers bent to kiss,
hands slowly pausing
along lines of shoulder
neck, thighs.
She hears a smooth voice,
a mouth opened searching.
I hear only waves
breaths racing.

you are beautiful, old man in the green pumas

in my rushy bus self
i brushed right past you
to sit in the back and scowl at the students i am
learning to serve
but then i looked up
and saw your self-constructed safety-pin &
nylon-web glasses band
wrapped around your grey-white curls
marc jacobs has nothing on your edgy inventiveness
your irreverent practicality
has pulled the stop wire.
all my angsty thought-busses
squeak and groan to a stop
beside your beauty.

between binges and purges
and all my clawing, desperate attempts to reach
some physical ideal
between pushups and supersets
exfoliation and outfits carefully constructed around
“small waist”
“long legs”
and all the other routes i’ve been directed to go down...
you have detoured me
no cal-trans orange,
just the soft scuff-scuff of those
brilliant green pumas
and a wrinkled linen vest, with
enormous brown buttons, winking at me like giant & gentle
stop signs.

—*By Elizabeth Krause*

WHEN WE WERE ROBOTS

By Laura LeHew

you remember when Brent Spinner was a robot
he was painted silver on that reality show
you know Star Trek—how he was a real robot pretending
to be a man—you remember when we were robots
our arms were slinkies—not those plastic ones—real
metal ones like that Data guy—he is Everywhere now—
where on earth did he get white hair—do you think he’s an actor
mom painted a Baskin Robbins bucket shiny silver
for our head—I don’t know how we fit
in the carton but we did—do you
remember plastic pumpkins stuffed with candy?

ON HATING CO-WORKERS

By Lytton Bell

O you, with your two hour lunches
your seventh grade reading level, mean gossip
your tendency to blame all your mistakes on me
I don't hold it against you

After all, here we are
Both of our lives, and our many disappointments
have dumped us both on this doorstep
kittens in a basket, mewling to survive

Both tardy, both unmotivated, both lacking "team spirit"
squeezing numbers into spreadsheets in fonts too small to read
faxing, e-mailing, phoning, texting our despair
manacled to carpeted cubicles – a life sentence

And always the same bitter coffee of discontent
brewing in our back rooms

We should be allies but can't
your layoff is my job security
Your laziness, your poor attitude
are my promotion and raise -

perverse joy of finding typos in your memos
sick intoxication of overhearing your boss tell you again how
he expected more

BRING BACK THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

By Ann Privateer

with extravagant, elaborate dress,
uncomfortable shoes, stays, straps
and meta-physical poets, John
Donne, Andrew Marvell—
royalty/monarchy/absolutism,
religious refugees, witch-craft
on an open field, the eye of a gnat
coupled with two shakes of a lamb,
thank you, Mammon.

UNRAVELED

By Mike Berger

I didn't know how to stop the process.
None of the medications seem to help.
This was a high strung woman with a
deep perfectionist streak.
She felt control slipping away and knew
she was coming unraveled. She was tearing
apart at the seams; fading in and out of
reality.
Hard economic times had delivered a
devastating blow. She was the top sales
person in a brokerage firm. The bottom had
fallen out of the business.
So what do you do when the cheering stops?
You try to hold it together but you slide down
hill; everything else fails.
That's not a good scenario for someone who
believes that first is first and second is nothing.
Gone are the flashing eyes and a ready smile.
No more glib sales diatribe. She sits in the
corner and cries. There are no medications
that will help. We can only sedate her and
ease her pain.

STANDING ON SOLID GROUND

By Donald R. Anderson

Here lies conscience,
dilapidated, prematurely buried,
half a world away.
It scrapes the lid with its fingernails,
hoping the titanium holds air beyond,
that will carry the sound.
Tap-tap-tap, Bang-bang-bang, Tap-tap-tap.
Tears are being shed
by millions seemingly helpless,
unable to do anything about it.
The coffin is six feet under,
and it's been a good three terms or more there,
somehow conscience gets by without us.
The only thing it holds onto,
the sweet thing called come-uppings,
as tit-for-tat and nose-for-nose are still above ground.
Strange feeling without it,
the waiting for it to resurface,
but somehow the lines across my face
don't seem to connect the two,
and the ground is such a heavy burden,
that this country doesn't seem to carry it nearly as well
as the world it's buried in.

THE ONLY CUSTOMER

By Robert Lietz

But who thinks to brake,
or thinks
how braking complicates,
imagines
whole families say, keeping
an eye out
sheltering, and, under
bridges, riders,
in adventuring spring, with
better minds,
I'm sure, than
to inspire,

reviewing these roofless
local stones, these
places you might have
sold antiques from,
peddled sandwiches from
at the mid-century,
where drizzle's the only
customer,
spending, as drizzle
will, in half
a century, among
the
spent farm
homes,
white barns, white homes
and brick,
white-railed fences,
wheat,
and snowed over stubble,
where living's
re-read, re-formed,
the living
are put away, and
put
away as
replicas.

FIGURING OUT THIS HAIKU

By Mary Beth Asaro

Death is life's
greatest artwork on display.

GRAMPA DROVE A MILKCART

By Donna Marie Miller

My grandpa came over on a boat
During the potato famine in Ireland
He settled in the Irish Channel of
Old New Orleans
His mamma died when he was little
And his father was an alcoholic
So he just about raised himself
From the age of fourteen

Grampa delivered papers
And he drove a milk cart out to the country farms
Where he met my Grandma
In a Cajun farming community
And when he drove through
The white egrets rose in a cloud
From the swampy rice fields

Grampa was a smart man
But he had little education
He taught himself accounting
And got a job keeping books for the city
Of New Orleans
He drove a cab too, for a while

He always sat so silent
In front of the TV after work
He read Agatha Christi novels
Late at night in bed
And he loved Richard Nixon
And raged against Archie Manning
Who in his opinion, ruined the Saints
football team

Watergate just about broke his heart
He never talked about it
But he watched every single bit of it
On the news on TV
He never went to church much
But just before he died
He started saying the rosary every day
When the pain got really bad
He always prayed for someone else,
never for himself.

AFTER THE SERVICE

By Martha Ann Blackman

(For Mom)

After the service,
I thought of
a million things.
How, in my tender years
she worked the farm,
she made soap
and washed clothes
outside in a big iron pot.
She smoked
her own bacon
and canned her own
ripe garden,
a full season
at a time.
I would say how
she planted row after row,
all day in the hot sun,
and harvested, too,
with a jar of ice water
half buried for us
in the field.

UNTITLED

By Simon Perchik

The ground so slow to heal
has yellowed though the camera
injected a faint gloss
calmed the family and friends
still afraid to move the body
—not too close! Your cheek
could scare her off and the snapshot
tree and all, left empty
cared for by the sun alone
can't get a hold :each evening
hides in front with the small lake
pressed against her forehead
that has nothing to warm
and though the frame is wood
you shake it the way leaves
once left in place tell you
here! among the kisses
with no time to lose.



A SAMPLE OF HIS WORK AND AN INTERVIEW BY LISA JONES

Last year Matthew Zapruder was a popular teacher and dynamic reader at the SPC conference in April. He has a new book, *Come on All You Ghosts*, to be published this year by Copper Canyon Press, but I recently read his second collection of poems, *The Pajamaist* (2006), a book that awakens me with its everythingness; smart edgy humor, fresh image, and an amiable kind of melancholy.

Selected by Tony Hoagland as the winner of the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America, and by *Library Journal* as one of the top ten poetry volumes of 2006, the work travels through cities and the mind, through post 9/11 New York, through the philosophy of suffering, to moments at the periphery of what can be seen or named. There are poems for those seeking evocative coherence and for those who delight in the postmodern push away from narrative and direct metaphor. Many are collages—of modified song lyrics, phrases from horoscopes, radio conversations or pieces he wrote at different points in time—typically lengthy (without feeling so) and musical with short lines.

Zapruder's first collection, *American Linden*, won the Tupelo Press Editor's Book Prize. He co-translated Eugene Jebeleanu's *Secret Weapon*, and collaborated with a painter to write *For You in Full Bloom*. He's also a lead guitar player in the band "The Figments" and currently lives in San Francisco. He will teach as the Holloway Lecturer in the Practice of Poetry at the University of California-Berkeley in Fall 2010 and teaches a number of workshops including as a member of the permanent faculty of the Juniper Summer Writing Institute at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and at St. Mary's College.

THE INTERVIEW

JONES: In *The Pajamaist*, "20 poems for Noelle" and the title poem really stand out for me. Is "The Pajamaist" really something that you might expand as I saw suggested somewhere? I hope that wasn't just a joke, because it is such an intriguing exploration of suffering and I want that speaker to explore other issues in that space and with that lighting.

ZAPRUDER: "The Pajamaist" was an idea I thought of in my sleep. I woke up laughing at the title, and the poem actually came pretty quickly, I think pouring straight out of me over the course of not that many weeks. It was a very bleak time in my life, and I have no desire to revisit it, but the German publisher Luxbooks has done a translation/adaptation of the poem, "Der Pyjamaist," illustrated by the amazing artist Martina Hoffman, and I hope that an American publisher will do a version with her drawings and the original text. Maybe someday there will be a movie. It would be a strange one.

JONES: In "There is a Light" the market is both maternal and a pregnant man, yes? The poem feels very sociological and then it zeros in on this individual woman. How did this poem come to you? There's such a lovely balance of social, personal, sensuality and abstraction, open-ended mystery and message anchoring this poem.

I HAVE ADVOCATED, WHEN READING A POEM, THAT ONE SHOULD FOCUS ON WHAT THE WORDS ACTUALLY SAY, AS OPPOSED TO WHATEVER PRESUPPOSITIONS ONE MIGHT HAVE ABOUT THAT PARTICULAR POET, OR POETRY IN GENERAL.

ZAPRUDER: I wrote that poem when I was living in Ljubljana, Slovenia, for a couple of months one summer, writing and translating. I have a lot of friends there but also of course since they have their own lives, and also because of my own preference for solitude, I spent many evenings alone, on the balcony, smoking, watching this 24 hour market. The poem came to me from watching the market and stretching out and playing with the sentence structure until the poem seemed to embody all the different emotions I was feeling being in this place, maybe happy loneliness is another way of saying it. I think in some ways every poem is, in its entirety, the name for that particular feeling you feel when you read that particular poem. So that poem names the feeling I had there at that time, and if it resonates with you or another reader, that makes me very happy. In a lonely way.

JONES: I have recently listened to David St. John and Brenda Hillman speak about hybridism. What are your thoughts on this? Who would you recommend as role models for poets who seek to write an innovative and evocative poetry that braids the social and the personal, but who want to land somewhere mid-way between Dorianne Laux and Brenda Hillman? (Obviously we all want to write like ourselves, but hopefully my intention comes through.)

ZAPRUDER: Good poetry could be to some degree “innovative,” though it could also feel very ancient. For me the social and personal unavoidably and always in true poetry coexist, because we are all human beings, and we all use language, which (as Emerson and Vico and others have written about) is our collective memory, social and personal, private and public, and every single word has those and other aspects resonating within it, and can be activated in many different ways depending on context.

By the way, midway between Dorianne Laux (in North Carolina) and Brenda Hillman (in Berkeley) would, if you were walking, according to Google maps, take you about 20 days and land you in somewhere NW of Dallas, in Oklahoma.

JONES: I love your comparatives between Canada and the Dalai Lama and the humor of *The Pajamaist*. Have you always been funny? (Also: Folks say you can learn to write or make art, but you can't learn to be funny. Am I doomed to write serious poetry--can I learn to be funny?)

ZAPRUDER: Thanks! I've never met anyone who isn't funny; some people just are very self-conscious, which I can really identify with. It's possible those people could

think of the poem as a place to act out some of the impulses their shyness in personal situations might not allow. That could be better for everyone. All I would say to this is, I feel sorry for people who feel like they HAVE to be serious in poetry, or that poetry isn't poetry unless it's serious. I say be exactly as funny as you feel like being.

JONES: Could you tell me more about the fable drinker and the little blond body [in “The Lark”]? They speak to me intuitively.

ZAPRUDER: I don't know what else to say. They are intuitive to me too. The words felt good to write and then they seemed to mean something and take on their own impulses in the poem. They are not metaphors for anything, just characters. A little friendly, also a little alien.

JONES: You have championed the importance of writing/valuing/reading poetry that is challenging to understand or experimental in form. Your own work ranges quite a bit, in its forthrightness. Which of your poems would you be willing to give the reader some help with?

ZAPRUDER: Have I championed that? I think I have advocated, when reading a poem, that one should focus on what the words actually say, as opposed to whatever presuppositions one might have about that particular poet, or poetry in general. Maybe you are referring to this article I wrote for the Poetry Foundation? Keep in mind that the comments which immediately accuse me of trying to foist gibberish upon an unwilling public bear no relation to what I am actually saying in the article, which is of course ironic, given the main point I am making, about careful reading.

I have no bias towards or against so-called “challenging” or “experimental” poetry. I read and edit (with Wave Books) a wide variety of poets, with different aesthetic approaches. And if I am reading a poet and feel there is (to quote the original experimental writer, Gertrude Stein) no there there, I usually put down the book and quietly walk away.

If a poem of mine needs my help then I think it is probably not finished. It is maybe finished when at last it is ready to need other people to read it.

ZAPRUDER CONTINUED

JONES: I found “Thank You for Being You” a bit challenging at first, but full of engaging lines. This feels like a poem that might have come to you more mysteriously, whereas the one about the Albanian Market I might imagine would have been driven by a more self aware use of the metaphor. I’m intrigued by the beginning especially: Gold buying gold, overcoming presentation.

ZAPRUDER: Poems can for anyone I think come in all sorts of different ways, but they usually need to pass through some deep and dangerous period of not knowing, in order to come out on the other side and be what they need to be. In other words a poem can begin with a very mysterious phrase or absolutely illogical attraction to a word or image, and end up becoming a narrative; or a poem can begin with some straightforward event or memory, and end up being something very different. It depends on what the emotional needs of the poem are, and what form will most allow the poem to manifest those emotions in the most powerful way for the writer and reader.

I don’t think there are any metaphors in “Thank You For Being You,” intuitive or not. It’s more of a collage of phrases, events, images, that, for me and I think for some other people in the right moment, in and of themselves accumulate into an emotional impression. I think that in that poem when some people -- not everyone, but some -- get to the lines:

Carousel with its horses removed,
suddenly I don’t feel so abandoned.
I want to communicate with you,
I’m trying as hard as a human,
but the white space always stops
me.

they are moved. Language is a very, very powerful medium or substance or whatever you want to call it, for the reasons I mentioned above. Sometimes if you find the right way to let a freer, less constructed version of language fill a poem (without the mediation of a narrative “I” or a situation or any of the other powerful and wonderful mechanisms one can use to construct a poem), the words can vibrate with possibility, aforementioned collective memory, familiar hopes and sadnesses, and so on. But of course that’s just one way to write a poem, no better or worse than others. It’s good when it’s good.

THERE IS A LIGHT MATTHEW ZAPRUDER

Whenever behind your windows I look
from my balcony down at you you are open,
at any hour among the pyramids
of eggplant and whiskey albanian shadows
drag their shadows, I could watch
this shadow clock for hours and do,
it is timing me, and each time your doors
part my lips hydraulical
silently clatter o solemn untamed
maternal albanian market why
at this fucked time of night are you open
locked within yourself and asking
the same thing of me, small
leaning over the balcony figure watching
your painless hydraulic scar
from both sides open releasing silence,
in silence you have been here
forever since 1993, you assure me
with your calm ancient terror,
you force a man who looks on you
to doubt his sleep and lack
of sleep, o most magnificent
pregnant man, you give birth to things
surrounded with chocolate
and things with chocolate buried
inside them, you give birth to pine-
scented dishwashing fluids, you give
birth to placenta which some people eat,
you give birth to etcetera’s
every pleasure in every hour,
o low market wearing the naked dress
of windows lettered with emerald
translucent letters, what pale
green inside me memory dress
now gives birth to the story of you
giving birth to the story of me
giving birth to my awe of you
at 3 a.m. giving birth to a mother
of her sleeping children young and free
who with pale green arabic music
leaking from one of her earrings
looks up with her gaze and unlocks me
then turns into her drifting toward
the opposite and therefore holy direction

—
**Purchase the book to read the rest of the poem
and find other poems at Zapruder’s website,
<http://matthewzapruder.wordpress.com>**

TWO EXCERPTS FROM ZAPRUDER'S TITLE POEM, "THE PAJAMAIST"

In my dream, I was writing a novel called The Pajamaist.

There had been a marked advance in the field of suffering. Researchers in the Institute For The Advancement Of The Reduction Of Suffering had discovered it could be transferred, painlessly, from one subject to another. What did this mean in practical terms? No one had to suffer any longer, at least not for free!

We had only to sleep in each other's pajamas, or take some kind of pill to supplement the pajama switching. I hadn't yet dreamed this out.

The first and greatest of all the sufferers was the Pajamaist, an unemployed white whale in his midthirties. I mean male.

When I sleep I don't wear pajamas. I prefer to sleep naked and thrash the bed sheets around until they wrap me in a protective covering with only my head and feet exposed. Each of my sleeping partners has added to the catalogue of possible means of exhibiting displeasure with this nightly process, yet suspiciously, not one has ever thought to buy me pajamas.

Maybe they think pajamas would make me resemble a float in the annual sleep parade.

Well there should be.

Once I bought a pair of white silk pajamas, it ended badly.

The pajamaist had been privately operating as a sufferer, nights and weekends for a few friends and relatives, who in their days and nights began to exhibit such characteristics of a totally suffer-free happiness back from the subjects to their common source, a tiny impossibly black dot of suffering.

...

The investigator further noted that in the course of his observations (and especially at night when he should have been sleeping) he had divined in the Throes nine varieties of suffering in addition to the tenth, the Purely Physical: suffering that others suffer less than you; suffering that others suffer more than you; suffering that there is suffering at all; suffering for "no reason"; suffering that there can be suffering for "no reason"; suffering that there are logical connections but no God or vice versa; suffering that you have in the past suffered and thus "wasted time"; suffering that you will again in the future suffer and thus "waste time"; and suffering that those you love have, or will, in the future suffer from any of these varieties.

Independently the researchers had come exactly to this Categorization system, but fearing, the Investigator would in his newfound boldness go found a Competing Institute, diagnosed him as schizomniac anal-suppressive and suggested an Eastern Treatment

SPC Poets' Workshop

Every Tuesday

Time: 7:30pm to 9pm

Location: Hart Senior Center

Workshop facilitator: Danyen Powell

Contact: (530) 756-6228

Cost: Free

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You can attend and participate in the workshop or sit in for one session and observe the process. If you are going to participate in the workshop, bring 15 copies of a poem. For more information, please contact the workshop facilitator, Danyen Powell, at (530) 756-6228.

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



I AM HONORED TO BE TAKING OVER AS MANAGING EDITOR OF *POETRY NOW*. Our publication is going through some restructuring right now, and I believe that you will be pleased with the changes during the next few issues. We have, of course, switched publication from monthly to every other month, and we will add more online content. Your opinion is important, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm finishing my MA in English—Creative Writing at CSUS. I hold degrees in studio art, fashion design, early childhood education, and English. I am a Sacramento Poetry Center board member and am active in many arts organizations in the Sacramento area. In addition to poetry, my other loves include designing and sewing garments, art (fiber, pen and ink, watercolor, mixed media, serigraphy), bicycling, and the blues. In my past life, I've worked as a preschool teacher, designer, manual writer, sewing instructor, custom tailor, customer service rep, and I owned my own needlework design and supply mail order business where I produced a monthly newsletter without benefit of a computer. I currently tutor writing and teach sewing. I've worked as executive editor on *Calaveras Station* for the past two years and as creative nonfiction editor for one year before that, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to work on *Poetry Now* with talented, dedicated editors, designers, and staff.

Trina

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MIKE BERGER has authored two books of short stories. Three of his humor pieces have won awards. His work has appeared or will appear in thirty-five journals, including *AIM*, *Still Crazy*, *First Edition*, *Stray Branch*, *Mid West Quarterly*, *Evergreen* and *Krax*. He holds a Ph.D. in Clinical and in Research Psychology.

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DIANNA HENNING'S poetry books include *The Tenderness House* and *The Broken Bone Tongue*. Her work has appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *The Lullwater Review*, *Poetry International*, *Fugue*, *The Asheville Poetry Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review* and *The Seattle Review*. She holds an MFA in Writing from Vermont College. She and her husband Kam are owners of a writers' retreat, Thompson Peak Retreat. Her new website is www.diannahenning.com

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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 most recent book *Katrina* is forthcoming from Poetic Matrix Press. Her web site is www.lynlifshin.com

DONNA MARIE MILLER is an artist, writer, singer-songwriter, small press publisher and teacher who lives in Fredonia, NY. She has shown in the Columbia Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center, and Erie Art Museum among many others and has taught classes in creativity, Benedictine spirituality, Native American Spirituality, oil and acrylic painting, drawing, hand-made book art, Victorian art and writing.

BZ NIDITCH is a poet, playwright, fiction writer, and teacher as well as founder and artistic director of The Original Theater in Boston. His work has been published in numerous journals, including *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Art*, *The Literary Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Hawaii Review*, *Le Guepard*, *Kadmos*, *Prism International*, *Jejune*, *Leopold Blum*, *The Antioch Review*, and *The Prairie Schooner*.

SIMON PERCHIK is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. A complete bibliography is available at his website: www.simonperchik.com.

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MARIE J. ROSS' poems have been published in *The Song Of San Joaquin*, *Rattle Snake Review*, *Shadows Ink Selected Poems*, *Sun Shadow Mountain an Anthology*, *Ina Coolbrith Circle (Anthology 10)* and others. In 2009 she won a third place prize poem in The artist Embassy International Dancing Poetry Contest, which she read at The California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. Her poem, "Oh Honored Stone" is inscribed in granite at the All Veterans Memorial Plaza in Lodi, CA.

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