



# poetry now

**The Sacramento Poetry Center's Monthly Newsletter Journal for**

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

## ***Sometimes in the Open* – fragmented first-person notes...**

For six months I received emails from poets all over the state. They attached three or four poems, ideas, questions, biographies. I picked a poem or two from each submission, and pasted them one by one into a document that slowly took shape; it seemed as if it would never be complete. I talked with Brad, Benjamin, and Richard about book sizes, paper, margins, headers and footers, a table of contents. Talked with Kristin at the California Arts Council about how many, what kind of theme, color, when we would need it. I accumulated a stack of books and letters from the poets who didn't use email; I had to type them in and double check line breaks, punctuation. I still had a list of writers to track down, items to follow up on. "Do you want an apostrophe here, or is this a stylistic approach?" The book grew, and became a book at last. On March 16, 2009, twelve boxes filled with copies of *Sometimes in the Open* – an anthology by California's Poets Laureate – arrived at my home. Now, of course, the hard work begins! April 6 will be our book release party at California Stage – we'll have a reception at 6:30, and the reading starts at 7:30. Hope you can make it – Julia and Dennis plan to read, and we'll have special guests from up to 200 miles away. Be there. Thanks to all! If you need a copy before then, you can get the book at The Book Collector on 24<sup>th</sup> Street.

Saturday, April 25 is the second annual "Our Life Stories" conference put on by Hart Senior Center and Cosumnes River College – Sign up by Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup> to attend this fine conference – James Houston will be the keynote speaker. \$30.00 includes lunch, workshops, and materials. [writersconference@pacbell.net](mailto:writersconference@pacbell.net)

April 30 is the second national "Poem in your pocket" day this year – so pick up a poem at our place at any of the April readings. The idea is simple: select a poem you love during National Poetry Month then carry it with you to share with co-workers, family, and friends on April 30, 2009. We'll have poems that fit your pocket, compliments of *Poems-for-All*.

May 4 – Advance notice – SPC's third annual *High School Poetry Contest* winners will be reading at California Stage. 7:30 start time.

On May 16 we're helping to coordinate the first *Multicultural Childrens' Literary Festival* at Fremont Park, in conjunction with CADA, Friends of Fremont Park, Councilman Rob Fong, and a number of other community and arts organizations. Check [www.mccaf.net](http://www.mccaf.net) for info, or email [mccaf@jps.net](mailto:mccaf@jps.net) if you want to help out!

And be sure to check out the newly revamped SPC website – it's changing, adding more information that you can use. With everything that's going on, it's the only way I can keep track of all the projects and events we're doing. Tell a friend, bring a friend, and put a poem in your pocket. -- B

**Joyce Odam** has been published by hundreds of journals, including *the Christian Science Monitor*, *the Rattle*, *the Seattle Review*, *The Lyric*, and *the Bellingham Review* and has published more than fifteen books and chapbooks of poetry. Her many awards include Grand Prize winner of Artists Embassy International's Dancing Poetry Contest, the Voices International Bernie Babcock Memorial Award, and the California Federation of Chaparral Poets Golden Pegasus award (twice). She was editor of *Poetry Depth Quarterly*, and since its closing, she focuses on her monthly *Brevities* and her work with Rattlesnake Press. She is featured in *Poets on Deck*, a deck of playing cards that celebrates Sacramento poets from the late 1960's to the very early 1980's which is available at the Crocker, the Book Collector, and Time Tested Books. "*Silence as its Own Desire*" won an honorable mention in the 2008 SPC Contest.

## SILENCE AS ITS OWN DESIRE

By Joyce Odam

*DESIRING SILENCE*: Holy Island  
From *Lamdash*, 1994, Craigie Aitchison

The blue boat waits on its reflection,  
soundless on the motionless water.

The boat is empty and takes this time to sleep.  
It knows where both the shores are.

It knows how to go back and forth between.  
It lives in the cool shadow of the mountain.

The mountain guards the sunlight.  
The water holds the mountain in its depth.

The boat floats on the mountain.  
Time is measureless.

The water holds the boat like a trick of reality.  
The boat does not keep time.

Time sleeps in the blue silence of the boat.  
The boat dreams of the silence.

The red sky drowns in its own reflection.  
The calm water bleeds every day at this hour.

## GOODBYE

By Joyce Odam

(After Goodbye, a poem by Robert  
Creeley,  
American Poets Say Goodbye to the  
20th Century)

Say it simply. Say it softly and sadly.  
It is the longest word you will ever say.  
Give it a black border for the death it imitates.

Let it go freely.  
You cannot call it back.  
It is a word without meaning.

A quick word. A spondee word.  
It will come of its own volition.  
You cannot regret it.

Let it take everything it needs.  
How you hoarded it.  
How you refused it – keeping it

longer than necessary.  
Let it have your regret, that baggage of doubt,  
that second thought.

<p><i>"Revisionings" won an honorable mention in the Ina Coolbrith contest in the mid-1990s.</i></p> <p><b>REVISIONINGS</b> By Joyce Odam</p> <p>A play of sevens, and the soft air of night. A chair by a window.</p> <p>Light lying across the rug. A sound from the street. Rain-swish. Moan.</p> <p>A superstition touching my shoulder. You in your world, feeling shadow.</p> <p>A letter slipped under a door. A key in the lock. A rocking chair that won't rock.</p> <p>Anything old that matters. A certain tone in a certain silence.</p> <p>Some new beginning cutting its string. A pair of scissors. Shining.</p> <p>All endings brought here for mending. Like socks. A basket of thread.</p> <p><i>How many times must I tell you not to do that,</i> I say. You stand behind me. You stroke my hair.</p> <p>I cut the moonlight into the shape of curtains. I wait for the shadow to release me.</p> <p>Soon I will shuffle cards for solitaire. I will lay them out on a patient table.</p> <p>Soon I will mention something to the mirror. I will release my image into the light-switch by the door.</p>	<p><b>Peter Layton</b> is a poet who lives and writes in Lakewood, California.</p>
	<p><b>DISSIPATE</b> By Peter Layton</p> <p>If I take a knife, cut the vacuums, the rubbery plastic tubes to my no-more-elastic, heart it brimming with its lifelong steaming fluids.</p> <p>The semi secure pounding drum inside which I dreamed to give you you with your imperfections, golded over your perfect perfections.</p> <p>Would that I could've perhaps've seen what was just like hurt coming what was against your arterial walls, what plaque or dangerous red crosses roiling deeper inside.</p> <p>While you smiling over a coffee brim you brilliant with your cogent hummed-over thoughts.</p>
	<p><b>CUT SLICES OF PAPER</b> By Peter Layton</p> <p>I see whales galleons conestoga wagons as the voluming clouds advance toward me from the sky.</p> <p>Sometime they are you angelic, vast, that I may think about cannot touch in your now blue forever.</p>

**David Iribarne** is graduate of CSUS where he earned a B.A. in English. Presently, he works with a non-profit agency as a Job Coach for the developmentally delayed population. He is working on a poetry book that chronicles his mother's ordeal with breast cancer.

**Marilyn Wallner** finds poetry workshops and creative writing classes life-enhancing and exhilarating as she nears 80 years old. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Now*, the *American River College Review*, and more.

### **MEDIAN OF A SECOND**

By David Iribarne

Car hit median  
sailed toward us  
forever passed us  
barely missed  
within a fraction of a second.

Several images went  
through my head:  
how long I had waited to meet you  
the joyful times we had  
your genuine smile  
all almost lost as  
I saw the car ping pong  
the rail and come toward us.

I sped up to avoid it  
to avoid uncertain grief.  
It missed and it hit the side rail.  
Sweat left my brow as my heart  
wanted to stop.

Next day, on the road again  
passed beautiful sycamore trees  
saw pink and grey clouds over sunset  
you caressed my neck.

Stayed up that night  
watched you as you slept  
wondered where your dreams  
were taking you.  
Ran my fingers through  
your brown hair,  
walked my fingers down  
your soft face.

In the shadow of a second  
I could have lost that  
could have lost what mattered  
what I had been searching for  
what we don't think about.

### **EARLY MORNING WALK**

By Marilyn Wallner

This is how I like it best.  
Just my little dog  
and I owning the neighborhood.  
Nobody out but us.  
I can concentrate on  
what there is here:  
the seasons' colors,  
bird gossip, airplane's drone  
Union Pacific's distant salute,  
agonizing sound of old redwood shakes  
yielding to the workmen on  
Yates' roof.  
They are going with wood again.  
Tomorrow this stretch  
will smell like freshly sharpened pencils.

### **THE LAST SUPPER**

By A.D. Winans

Dining at a Thai restaurant  
Small talk becomes no talk  
As you poke at your food  
Half-flushed from  
A Thai ice tea

I can't remember why  
We came here  
Or even who you are  
As the waiter asks  
If everything is alright  
As if he knows something  
I don't

The table linen is perfect  
The light just right  
So why is it that  
I'm left feeling  
Like a condemned man  
Eating his last meal

**Francis Raven's** books include two volumes of poetry, *Shifting the Question More Complicated* and *Taste: Gastronomic Poems* as well as a novel, *Inverted Curvatures*. His poems have been published in *Bath House*, *Chain*, *Big Bridge*, *Bird Dog*, *Mudlark*, *Caffeine Destiny*, and *Spindrift* among others. Raven's critical work can be found in *Jacket*, *Logos*, *Clamor*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *The Electronic Book Review*, *The Emergency Almanac*, *The Morning News*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Media and Culture*, *In These Times*, *The Fulcrum Annual*, *Rain Taxi*, and *Flak*.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

By Francis Raven

sand beneath skin, contemplating  
glass or something else blown

a horn, traveling, your ugly motel  
as an owner is bruised

increasing the police can limit a gang  
but each house pulls its own sounds within

perfect sequence, graphically  
the grievance is obvious for years

at least to the trained eye, to the scientist  
it takes so long to actually go out of business

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**The Sacramento Poetry Center's Third Annual High School Poetry Writing Contest**

*No cost to enter!*

Postmark Deadline: April 15, 2009

Limit of 3 poems per student

*Prizes include:*

*\$100.00 for our Grand Prize winner Free books and swag for finalists Publication in Poetry Now, the monthly journal of the Sacramento Poetry Center Grand Prize winner will receive an invitation to read their work at the Sacramento Poetry Center in the Summer.*

Be sure to include an SASE (Self-addressed, stamped envelope) if you want notification of winners.

Note: poems should not have your name on them – include a separate cover letter with your name, address, phone and email address, and the titles of your poems.

Also indicate the name of your school.

**Send your original poems to: High School Poetry Contest Sacramento Poetry Center P.O. Box 160406 Sacramento, CA 95816**

*Email submissions will be accepted: send to [tulereview@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto:tulereview@sacramentopoetrycenter.org) Put "SPC HS CONTEST" in the subject line. Include above information sheet as the body of the email, and send each individual poem as an attachment – MS Word documents only. Questions? [tulereview@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto:tulereview@sacramentopoetrycenter.org)*

Good writing and good luck!

# *Mundial Experimental*

by Tim Kahl

## **Reverdie/Aisling**

### **Materials and methods:**

The reverdie is a French form that dates back to the troubadours of the Early Middle Ages, which celebrates the coming of spring. The term literally meant “re-greening” and in the reverdie the poet would often encounter a symbolic form of spring, often times in the form of a beautiful woman. It frequently addressed the new growth in the woods and the fields, the singing of the birds and a time of hormonal excess. Because the spring began around the time of Easter, a reverdie would also welcome Easter as well as spring. For many poets of the early Middle Ages who used this form, the longing for birds led to the longing for heaven and praise for the Blessed Virgin. Hmmm . . . methinks that this could have also has the markings of being a secret longing for defilement. Whatever the speaker’s actual intent, the form follows that of the *chanson* (or song) which has five or six stanzas and no refrain.

The reverdie is also said to be the precursor for the Irish aisling (Irish for “dream”), a vision poem in which the form of a woman, sometimes old and beautiful, sometimes old and haggard would appear and carry forth on the current predicament of Ireland and its peoples, their fortune, their future and the possibility of a return to power vis-à-vis England. This political version grew out of the non-politicized reverdie.

### **Projects in the home:**

The key to writing the reverdie is (as is the key to everything else in life) finding the right woman, one who might inspire the re-greening in oneself. However, there is no formal writ that shall decree such a symbolic spring figure to be female. If Ginsberg can invoke the Kral Majales, then certainly the reverdie can loosen its constraints enough to allow for a male visage who will welcome the spring and/or the mighty tree as phallus! However, if one insists that the coming of spring signals a great despoiling, one way to proceed is to make a list of known/supposed virgins: Joan of Arc, Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa, Sophocles, Sri Aurobindo, If none of these historical virgins is someone you would like to see coming at you promoting the handiwork of chlorophyll, then you are on your own in naming and finding your own. Good luck.

Of course, there is no reason why one must stick to having human tour guides through the foliage and the twittering. A fox seems the wisest choice to lead a follower through the woods. Perhaps the eyes of the hawk-moth’s wings might settle upon you, perhaps Bambi awakening in a real woods after spending so many years on celluloid. Then there is the ever-present mosquito who never leaves one’s side while traveling through the dark heart of the woods. From there it is important to welcome every little sign of spring not just as a refreshing, but as an idiosyncratic world of its own making, a Broadway show of branches and tendrils and sepals and pistils. The thawed brook might serve as the soundtrack. It’s all one big production meant to entertain (or at least that’s the way it might be treated if the marketers got a hold of it). Bring on the dancing honeybees in the third act, the confetti of the cherry blossoms at the end of the show!

**Nancy Wahl**, author of two chapbooks, has won awards from Bazzanella, Literature Alive, New Millennium Writings, Tiger's Eye, Sacramento Poetry Center, and Glimmer Train. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her work has appeared in *The Suisun Valley Review*, *The Tule Review*, *Poetry Now*, *Healing Voices*, *ZamBomba*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Convergence*, *The Poet's Corner*, and in *Sacramento Anthology: One Hundred Poems* and *Poet's Corner Press Anthology: Best Poetry 2000-2004*.

**OUR TENDENCY TO FALL IN LOVE EVOLVED  
FROM THE NEEDS OF OUR PREHISTORIC  
ANCESTORS**

By Nancy Wahl

You eat what you hunt and gather  
say the psychologists about love  
and selecting a mate,

so even though the guy is an honest-to-goodness dream-boat  
pay attention to the little things.  
Notice, for example,  
if he ever reaches for his VISA.

Winds move up and down the valley  
today and the north wind is rollicking through  
kicking up blue,

stirring Mesozoic quanta  
and flinging it over this river  
and me,  
over thistle and chicory and memory,

memory of her when she was seventeen  
sucking up life –

her scholarship,  
flowering promises that turn to algae  
when the good-looking boy

driving the dark green convertible  
runs his fingers through  
her hair...*try to remember  
the kind of September when grass*

*was green and grain was yellow....\*\**  
The Pacific plate was forced under  
the North American plate  
slowly forming a shallow sea.

All this was here once:  
Mosasaurs swimming about catching fish,  
foraging for marine invertebrates...  
*try to remember....*

\*\*Lyrics from *The Fantasticks* by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt

*Coming from Rattlesnake Press!*

**CELEBRATIONS: IMAGES AND TEXT**

A SnakeRings SpiralChap of  
poetry and photography by  
**LAVERNE FRITH**

**EDGE OF WILDWOOD**

A littlesnake broadside by  
**TAYLOR GRAHAM**

and **MUSINGS3: AN ENGLISH  
AFFAIR**

A blank journal of writing prompts by  
**KATY BROWN**

*Join us Wednesday, April 8, 7:30 PM,  
for*

*these three readers at  
Rattlesnake Press's Fifth Annual  
BIRTHDAY PARTY/BUFFET*

*at The Book Collector  
1008 24<sup>th</sup> St., Sacramento*

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*For more info, including Rattlesnake Review  
deadlines,*

*go to [rattlesnakepress.com](http://rattlesnakepress.com) or  
check our daily blog, *Medusa's Kitchen*  
([medusaskitchen.blogspot.com](http://medusaskitchen.blogspot.com)).*

## PROVENANCE

By Nancy Wahl

An atmospheric phenomenon, rare,  
low-frequency radio waves,  
subtle changes in colors and sounds,  
undetected except for the rise of hair  
on the back of the scientist's neck  
or leaves twitching or maybe  
an aurora borealis or two—  
something stirring up the universe  
recapitulating the Absolute Beginning:  
open-street market, wares and antiques,  
strangeness...sun too hot, too dry,  
people haggling over the crouching raku bear.  
The man wants proof it was once owned  
by a famous star. He wants to buy it,  
take it home to his wife because  
he is a generous man. A proud man.  
The striking lady hanging seductively onto his arm  
doesn't care about authenticity.  
At times when meteors fall our way,  
some lucky observers both see and hear  
the phenomenon. Even though  
they enter the atmosphere high overhead,  
they make objects on the ground  
quiver and vibrate.  
He leaves, unreal man that he is, holding  
the crouching raku bear  
wrapped in the electrifying crackle of tissue.

**Fredrick Zydek** is the author of eight collections of poetry. Formerly a professor of creative writing and theology at the University of Nebraska and later at the College of Saint Mary, he is now a gentleman farmer when he isn't writing. He is the editor for Lone Willow Press.

## LETTER TO MY COUSINS ABOUT MARBLES

By Fredrick Zydek

Grandma made pies, cakes and pastry,  
Grandpa made caramels and homemade  
root beer. Grandma cooked pierogi,  
creamed vegetables, soup from chickens'  
feet while Grandpa smoked sausages

and salmon, hams and hocks. Grandma  
canned; he milked cows; she gathered  
eggs; and until his heart went bad, he  
chopped wood while she weeded her  
flowers and garden. Did you know he

built his home from boards made from  
trees he chopped down himself and sent  
to the mill? Those trees live on in his  
house to this day. Did you know he could  
build anything? Barns, houses, woodsheds,

that old root house out behind the back  
porch - built by hand from trees that once  
stood where his orchard thrived while we  
were young. He was a kid who came from  
Poland with about five bucks in his pants

and a lot of determination. He ended up  
owning a farm, a tavern on Main Street  
and real estate all over town. Did you  
know he liked terry cloth napkins, white  
shirts and ties and collected marbles? He

actually brought several with him from  
Poland - good luck charms he called them.  
When he died, Grandma give them to my  
dad, who collected marbles as well. Dad  
gave them to me. They sit in a huge glass

jug surrounded by hundreds of marbles I've  
collected from all over the world. On the top,  
I keep the handmade, baked and glazed clay  
marbles Grandpa told me once belonged  
to his father and before that - who knows?



**Terri Brown-Davidson's** first book of poetry, *The Carrington Monologues*, was nominated for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. She's received the 2007 New Mexico Writer's Scholarship, a Yaddo fellowship, and an AWP Intro Award, among other honors for her poetry and fiction.

### **MY MOTHER'S MIND: A SONNET**

By Terri Brown-Davidson

"I can't meditate anymore," my mother says. "My mind, lizard-like, skitters and feints when I try to calm it." I stare at her sere pale face, slide quietly into her eyes.

It's dark yet glitters with murk, a landscape littered with red and gold leaves that float then cling to my bare cold feet as I wander through the forest of my mother's silent mind, its fir trees wafting an intangible needled scent, its foliage unfurling, climbing, developing in bursts of gold-dappled light dimmed to shadows that lengthen, darken, turn black as the moist loamy earth squeezing up between my toes. In the landscapes we inhabit, everything cracks, disintegrates: twig and branch. Ash and bone. Everything goes dead and rotten inside the mind except the tiny orange light that flickers there still after my mother and I are gone.

### **ONE WOMAN'S TREASURE**

By Terri Brown-Davidson

"The dumpster diva," my husband calls me. His face flushes bloodless; his lips tighten so violently the dark gums gleam, eyeteeth glitter. Me, I stay feral those mornings sunlight slashes the rusting dumpsters auburn, crimson, gnawed and pocked. When no one's awake or sentient, seeking the glint of a tarnished fork, a mutilated chair, I climb overflowing Hefty sacks, peruse crusted pizza boxes for the love someone possessed and tossed out like garbage. While quieter women sleep, glide eel-like through the murk of mind-immersion and soundproofed black dreams, I forage for what was treasured then trashed while men in bright cars cast condescending glances.

A native of Cambridge, MA, **Charles H. Halsted** moved to Los Angeles during his teens and later earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and history from Stanford University in 1958. His career as an academic physician brought him to the UC Davis School of Medicine in 1974. During his decades in patient care, teaching, and medical research, he wrote more than 200 original scientific articles and reviews. As part of his transition toward retirement, he returned to his liberal arts interests and has studied in poetry workshops in Davis led by Hannah Stein and Julia Levine.

### MAGPIES IN ASCENDENCE

By Charles H. Halsted

There's a sequence of birdsongs at dawn,  
The distant moan of the mourning dove,  
Chirping crescendos of the sparrows,  
Shrill wrenks of the scrub jays,  
Loud caw-caws of the crows,  
And the kut-kuts of the magpies,  
Like wood sliding down a washboard.

Opening the door to our deck  
I'm greeted by a cautious squirrel  
Peering down from a tree branch.  
A sudden flurry of blue wings and flashing white  
breasts --  
Two kut-kutting magpies  
Bear down to flap the intruder  
Off to our neighbor's rooftop.  
Now they're in the treetops declaring  
Rule over their private territory, our backyard.

Along the road they strut brazenly  
Not three feet from passing cars,  
Picking over sticks and nuts  
Dropped from the trees by crows.  
They don't care if I stop to admire  
Their yellow bills, white breasts,  
Blue bodies, long tails, or  
If I walk right up and look  
Them straight in the eye, to  
Ask why they've flown in  
To spend this season with us.

Is it to remind us they've lived here  
For two million years, ten times as long as  
Our species has walked the earth,  
Foolishly carving it up and spewing pollution  
Into the over-heated atmosphere?  
Is it to tell us that we're interlopers on their stage?  
For after we've melted the polar icebergs,  
And the coastal rivers have risen to flood our valley,  
Magpies and their cousins will just move up to the  
foothills,  
God's flying creatures will continue  
To survive and evolve long after we're gone.

**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*.

### FALL IN LOVE

By Ann Privateer

with a perfect rose,  
bow into its beckoning flesh,  
its scent will awaken  
the dangers of beauty,

it will take you as high as when  
your father carried you  
on his shoulders  
before Marilyn Monroe  
was missed, before  
you gravitated  
to all things shiny,

before the new found freedom  
frontier contained  
sleeplessness, before

madness after love,  
before blindness  
became fickle, before  
a faster, sleeker model  
came home for a ride

in the illusive illusory  
shadowy cave  
where daylight dreamed

and dying matter loosened  
its shape;  
Fall in love  
outwardly, Again and Again.

**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](http://sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

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

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**Editor:** Frank Graham [grahampoet@aol.com](mailto:grahampoet@aol.com)

**Poetry Editor:** Cynthia Linville

**Website and Contributing Editor:** Tim Kahl

**Proofreader:** Martha Ann Blackman

**Interviews:** Lisa Jones

**Book Reviews:** Emmanuel Sigauke

**Design Editor:** Henry Chen

**Calendar Editor:** Aaron Gerwer

Please submit events to be listed on the calendar to [aarondscrub@yahoo.com](mailto:aarondscrub@yahoo.com)

**The Poet Tree**, also known as the Sacramento Poetry Center, is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets – including publications (Poetry Now and Tule Review), workshops, special events, and an ongoing reading series. Funded primarily by members, SPC is entirely run by a volunteer board of directors. We welcome your input and your interest.

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Contact us at

1719 - 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento CA 95816

[bobstanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobstanley@sbcglobal.net)

916-979-9706

Or visit our website at [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org).



**Layton Isaacs** lives in the Midwest and writes poetry, travel memoirs, short fiction and creative non-fiction. Currently, she is organizing a large and widely-varying body of her work from the last two decades. She has been published in English and French.

## **LANGUE**

By Layton Isaacs

I wonder sometimes if I am freer  
or a prisoner of this language I love,  
this tango of the tongue, this minuet.  
It is an addiction,  
stepping onto the roller coaster,  
feeling myself take off,  
going up, always up.  
Accelerating ever faster with each phrase,  
twisting around each r,  
wondering,  
“Will I be able to keep up?”  
Then, shooting back down the finishes,  
loving the careless ease of  
often ending on the vowel sound  
a: e, er, ais, ai, aie

## **PARIS ROMANCE**

By Layton Isaacs

It was a stray crimson bra strap kind of romance.  
No planning,  
just standing dripping in the rain.  
Don't know if I would have loved him  
were we not in Paris,  
but we were and I did.

Riding the Metro pressed up against him,  
Knew we were coming to the end of the line.  
Felt so alone and so young the morning I left him,  
Tears in the cab should have turned me back.  
He might not have made me happy forever,  
but I would have liked who I was in Paris,  
and who we were there together.



# poetry now

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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.