



Photo by Ted Hewitt

**POETRY  
CENTER**

Volume 33, #1 • Fall 2007

College  
of  
Humanities

Poetry Center  
**Housewarming Festival**  
in the new Helen S. Schaefer Building

**Sunday, October 14, 2007  
from 12 to 5 p.m**

**Inside This Issue**

|                                    |   |  |    |
|------------------------------------|---|--|----|
| Executive Director's Note          | 2 | Classes & Workshops Schedule           | 10 |
| Interview with Rae Armantrout      | 3 | Summer Resident Anna Green             | 12 |
| Calendar of Events                 | 4 | Live from the Archive: Lucille Clifton | 14 |
| Volunteer Spotlight on Lyn Pass    | 5 | Thank You                              | 15 |
| Staff Picks                        | 6 |  |    |
| Native Voices Symposium Highlights | 8 |  |    |

## 2 | Executive Director's Note

Thanks to the all-out efforts and “can do” attitude of the Poetry Center staff and volunteers we have finally made our way into the new Helen S. Schaefer Building. Now that we are living in our new home, I am more than ever struck by the poetic qualities and gestures inherent in this beautiful

place. The repeating rooflines stack like stanzas. The south angled window and metal wall are contrapuntal in material and position. A close reading of the library window reveals a surprising twist. Light throughout the building is paradoxically welcomed and refused (windows are everywhere but the books will be protected). Ceiling panels offer glimpses of the workings underneath. And the concrete poem, written in binary code, is literally punched into concrete.

In the spring of 2003, shortly after the architectural firm Line and Space was hired, we held an informal forum on Poetry and Architecture, led by Alison Hawthorne Deming and architect Harris Sobin (brother of the late Gustaf Sobin, an internationally renowned poet). Participants also included local poets Richard Siken and Lana Moussa, UA professor of architecture Alvaro Malo, Les and Susan Wallach and the Line and Space design team. A great many of the ideas we explored four years ago have become manifest in our finished structure. Here are some notes from that discussion.

Alison Deming talked about building and poetry as narrative, and the predictable and unpredictable forms both may take. “Buildings have rules about how forms are shaped but the way you move through the syntax of a building may change.” Poetry deliberately questions the way sentences and lines are put together: “it is designed to wake us up to language.” Ours is not a building primarily of squares and right angles but of trapezoids and curves. Throughout the building, as Emily Dickinson would say, we “tell

it slant” in angles and slopes and slippages (such as the open spaces between rooms and floors). “In poetry you can break the law of gravity,” said Les Wallach, so why not attempt to break it in a building built to house it?

Alvaro Malo insisted that the purpose of architecture is to induce a state of mind rather than to order the world. “The function of the architect is to produce an envelope of silence that you can puncture at times to let the sound come in.” Silence helps us make sense of the senses, he said. The poem, of course, begins and ends in silence. And poems are meant to be read in silence and aloud – simultaneously – throughout our new space.

Richard Siken thought the new building would offer visionary perspective. “We look to poetry to provide lines of sight,” he said. “Poetry is a window onto the world: sometimes transparent and sometimes opaque as stained glass. Our job as poets is to look out of the window.”

For Lana Moussa the new building would not just be for poets but for the community, the general reader who enters the building in a curious moment. Susan Wallach, a self-professed general reader, summed up the experience she hoped to have: “Really good art often causes me to change in some other area of my life.” Good architecture, she said, can cause you not just to reflect on the function of the building, “but to think and feel as a poet.”

What more could we ask?

Gail Browne, Executive Director



by Bonnie Jean Michalski

BJM: *You have a way of tackling large philosophical issues while undercutting the philosophical tone that burdens so much meditative poetry:*

and I try  
'instantly' then 'forever.'  
But the word is  
way back  
show-boating

(from "Up to Speed" in *Up to Speed*)

*Can you speak to this in terms of your thinking and writing process?*

RA: Most of my poems involve different tones, different voices rubbing together and creating friction. I guess I don't care for what Charles Bernstein called "tone-lock." One internal voice may be telling another one something on the order of "Get over yourself!" In those lines from "Up to Speed" I meant that as soon as I became conscious of trying to apply either the word "instantly" or "forever" to light, both the light ray and the moment of perceiving it had passed. Description has always fallen behind. Maybe this is because it's always involved in showing off or "showboating" and showboats are slow.

I want to "capture" something, some experience, but I also feel that the idea that words can capture things is silly. I want to invoke my complicity in human vanity and silliness as well as to show my real appreciation for "light, the traveler." There's always some tension between these two impulses.

BJM: *Your poems seem to linger on objects and ideas that are hard to categorize:*

1

As if a single scream  
gave birth

to whole families  
of traits

such as "flavor," "color,"  
"spin"

and this tendency to cling.

2

Dry, white frazzle  
in a blue vase—

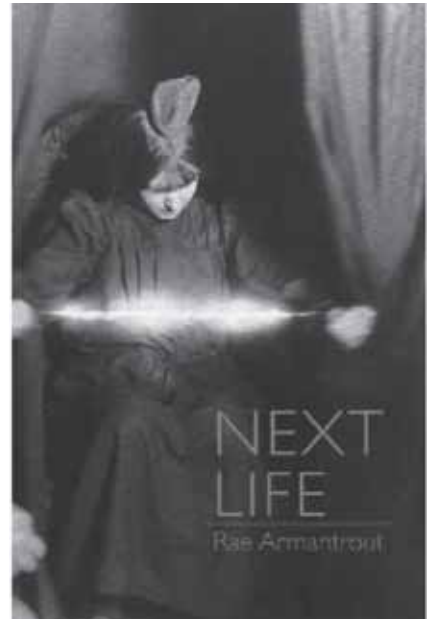
beautiful—

a frozen swarm  
of incommensurate wishes.

(from "Close," in *Next Life*)

*Does the stubbornly uncategorizable hold beauty for you? Frustration? Both?*

RA: I think I have a tendency to keep identity ambiguous in order to open up possibilities for meaning. In "Close" I identify things by acknowledging their traits. Don't we all do that? Isn't that how we do perceive things? "Flavor," "color," and "spin" are characteristics objects might have in our experiential world. They are also, as it happens, aspects of elementary particles. I think it's possible to read the first section of "Close" psychologically, i.e. the scream that accompanies some trauma might put a certain spin on subsequent events. On the other hand, if you know these nouns are terms in quantum mechanics, if you're seeing things in terms of their origin in the world of physics, then that scream might be the Big Bang. Keeping the subject matter



"uncategorizable" allows me to keep these two readings open so that a metaphor can develop. I don't find it frustrating. It allows me to do more in less space.

BJM: *What role does humor play for you in poetry, as a writer and as a reader?*

RA: I take humor seriously. Meaning itself can be funny, if you find it where or when you didn't expect it. This is what happens in puns. Surplus meaning is funny. In my work I'm interested not so much in literal puns as in a more spread out effect somewhere between pun and metaphor. I always take it as a compliment when people laugh at my readings.

Happy accidents and near misses can be funny. Congruity can be as funny as incongruity, if it's unexpected. Being found where you aren't supposed to be might be funny. A poem can catch a reader in an improper complicity. A poem can draw you along until you've agreed to something unseemly and even outrageous. Frank O'Hara does this, of course, but so does John

## 4 | Armantrout, continued & Fall Calendar

Ashbery, in his way. Lyn Hejinian's work is increasingly full of outrageous coincidences and graceful pratfalls.

BJM: *Many of your poems explore or lament how observation is hardest when the observer pays close attention:*

Galaxies run from us. 'Don't look!  
Was this the meaning  
of the warning in the Garden?  
When a dreamer sees she's dreaming, it causes  
figments to disperse.

*How can poetry get around these issues?*

RA: Really, I want to get into these issues not around them. I'm asking how the observer affects the observed. The story of the Garden of Eden seems to tell us that there's something flawed about consciousness. Adam and Eve eat

the fruit of the tree of knowledge and get expelled. When I read about how the universe is expanding in such a way that galaxies appear to be flying away from us on all sides, I imagine them fleeing from the contagion of consciousness or fading away from consciousness the way dream images do when we wake up. I guess you can call that a lament. At other times, though, I feel rather exhilarated by the fact that looking at anything in extreme close-up turns it into an unrecognizable wilderness.

Rae Armantrout will read her work  
at the Poetry Center  
on Thursday, November 29  
at 8 p.m.

This event is free and open to the public.

## FALL CALENDAR

**Sunday, October 14, 12-5 p.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Housewarming Festival*** — featuring R. Carlos Nakai, Alberto Ríos, Makako, Charles Alexander, Billy Collins, Al Perry, Tucson Madonnari, Typing Explosion, Luna Llena, Ofelia Zepeda, Marianne Dissard and Matt Mitchell, Brenda Hillman, Odaiko Sonora, Jane Miller, Robert Hass, Stories that Soar, Flam Chen, Alison Deming, Sonora Snoballs, Steve Orlen, Tucson Slam Team, Richard Shelton, Post & Bind, the Binary Wall Decoding Contest, and abundantly, heliographically more!

**Tuesday, October 16, 8 p.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Lydia Davis Reading for the UA Prose Series***

**Saturday, October 27 at 9 a.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Lucille Clifton Discussion Group: An Appreciation of the Poet's Work***

**Saturday, October 27 at 10 a.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Poetry Joey's! Activities for Kids in the Library***  
bring your favorite 4-8 year-old to the Poetry Center for kicks

**Thursday, November 1 at 7 p.m. at St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, 4440 N Campbell Ave**  
***Lucille Clifton Reading***

**Saturday, November 17 at 12 noon at the Poetry Center**  
***Rae Armantrout Discussion Group: An Appreciation of the Poet's Work***

**Thursday, November 29 at 8 p.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Rae Armantrout Reading***

**Saturday, December 8 at 9 a.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Theodore Roethke Discussion Group: An Appreciation of the Poet's Work***

**Saturday, December 8 at 10 a.m. at the Poetry Center**  
***Poetry Joey's! Activities for Kids in the Library***

These events are free and open to the public. The Poetry Center is located in the Helen S. Schaefer Building at 1508 E Helen St. (see back page of newsletter for map). Parking is usually available free of charge after 5 p.m. and on weekends in the Zone 1 lots surrounding the Poetry Center. For more information call (520) 626-3765 or email poetry@u.arizona.edu

Poetry Center: *Tell me a little about your background, how you came to Tucson, and how you've been involved in the arts here.*

Lyn Pass: I was born and raised in southern Connecticut. As an adult I lived in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the New York City area until my husband and I moved here in 1996. The impetus for the move was a photograph in a magazine of downtown Tucson, ringed by the Catalinas, under a sky of monsoonal clouds. I remember telling myself, "I'm going to live there someday." At the time we were in a New York suburb which is below sea level. Anywhere looked up to me. And Tucson, I read further, was a small city close to nature, devoted to the arts. After one quick trip West to actually see the place, we began packing.

I have been painting and writing since I was five. In the East I worked as a psychotherapist and geriatric social worker. For many years in Tucson I was active in a poetry collective, "The Fandango 8." We gave readings in book stores, at the Hotel Congress, the University of Arizona Museum of Art, and at the Tucson Museum of Art. I also worked with the former curator of the U of A Museum of Art, Lynn Berkowitz, on a series of workshops, for the docents and for the general public, on poetry/visual arts connections. I used examples of ekphrastic poetry to heighten appreciation of painting and sculpture—encouraging participants to write their own poetry in response to the art they saw in the museum. Some of my speaking engagements included an invitation by the U of A faculty wives on the subject of artist Jane Hammond's collaboration with John Ashbery.

PC: *Favorite poet? Author? Artist? Interests? Hobbies?*

LP: I took up the suggestion in Clare Rossini's poem which begins with a quote by painter Milton Avery: "Why talk when you can paint?" I leased a studio and, around the same time, rediscovered Baudelaire. It wasn't enough to read and enjoy him. I was drawn to go deeper and began doing my own translations, and finally, to illustrate them.

French has been part of my life since grade school, through college and during my graduate studies at the Institute of Fine Arts at NYC, and even now with a French daughter-in-law and three bilingual grandchildren. Some of my translations have been published and a few years ago, one of them was short listed for a translation prize. I continue to illustrate and translate Baudelaire and am currently working on two other projects—a series of conceptual portraits about friends and food and a commission for a



Lyn Pass

poet friend to illustrate Allen Ginsberg's poem: "First Party at Ken Kesey's With Hell's Angels."

PC: *What led you to start volunteering at the Poetry Center?*

LP: Tony Luebbermann, poet-advocate-around-town and Volunteer Coordinator at the Poetry Center, invited me. I volunteer once a week and in the past year I have sorted and catalogued the Center's vast and intriguing photograph collection. This collection is a rich historic resource. I used it recently when I was looking for a good likeness of Allen Ginsberg, and found a great black and white photo taken when he came here to read in 1969.

PC: *As an artist, what opportunities do you think the new Poetry Center will provide other artists in Tucson?*

LP: The Poetry Center is a resource for visual artists as well as for students and poets. Poetry inspired by visual arts, artist-poet collaborations, the artist as poet and vice-versa are traditions that are fresh and alive today, as they have been since the time of Homer. The Center's knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff and its collections of books, photographs and other media are there to be utilized...and all housed in a beautiful new space open to the public.

"Spotlight" continued from page 5.

### The Insulted Moon

O Moon, discreetly honored by our elders,  
In your high blue birthplace where radiant constellations  
Fit for a sultan's palace continuously attend you,  
My old Cynthia, lantern of our secret places,

Do you see spent lovers on their teeming beds,  
Their sleeping mouths moist and fresh, see  
The poet's brow furrowed over her work,  
Or little snakes at it in the dry grass?

Do you still travel in your yellow domino  
From evening to dawn, taking clandestine steps  
To kiss Endymion's enduring charms?

"—I see your mother, child of this impoverished age,  
Shove her drooping heap of years towards her mirror,  
Artistically touching up the breast that suckled you!"

Charles Baudelaire, translated by Lyn Pass

### La Lune Offensee

Ô Lune Qu'adoraient discrètement nos pères,  
Du haut des pays bleus où, radieux sèrail,  
Less astres vont te suivre en pimpant attirail,  
Ma veille Cynthia, lampe des nos repaires,

Vois-tu les amoureux sur leurs grabats pospères,  
De leur bouche en dormant montrer le frais èmail?  
Le poète buter du front sur son travail?  
Ou sous les gazons secs s'accoupler les vipères?

Sous ton domino jaune, et d'un pied clandestin,  
Va-tu, comme jadis, du soir jusqu'au matin,  
Baiser d'Endymion les graces surannées?

"—Je vois ta mere, enfant de ce siècle appauvri  
Qui vers son miroir penche un lourd amas d'années,  
Et platre artistement le sein qui t'a nourri!"

Charles Baudelaire

## STAFF PICKS

Bonnie Jean Michalski

*Little Book of Guesses* by John Gallaher  
Four Way Books, 2007

The *Little Book of Guesses* is constructed of boxes of the sparest language that become dynamic when placed just so by Gallaher. These meditative poems achieve what lyric poems attempt to achieve: images recanted in a so-soft tone that is trembling just seconds from a high note. The thinking is there but too busy not hitting you over the head to dwell on abstraction. "It is nice" the people in his poems say, "to need to be saved from something / and then to be saved."

Rodney Phillips

*Dance Dance Revolution* by Cathy Park Hong  
W. W. Norton, 2007

I like poetry that privileges words at play, written by a playful wordster, or a wordy player like Cathy Park Hong. In her latest book, she is purportedly a modern day Virgil, guiding us curious Dantes through new worlds, a crazy Korea, and crazier 'Merica—at least, at least these two places. This is really pidgin, widget and an earful too. I like poetry that privileges sound. Here we have it, a playground of patois, a wonderland of words. This book is so inventive, so baroque, so formally smart, so not to be missed.

Renee Angle

*Bone Pagoda* by Susan Tichy  
Asahta Press, 2007

If "a grammar is a gun..." in Susan Tichy's new collection *Bone Pagoda*, then I've been taken hostage. This is a collection that is fiercely aware of itself and its retelling of the horrors of the Vietnam War. This is a collection whose formal constraints are so refined and elegant that they clash horribly against gory images of loss that are so deep, so entrenched in the retelling we forget how to speak. Written entirely in couplets, save the first long prose poem entitled "Couplet," Tichy's lines act like tectonic plates, revising and crushing each other. They act as both frames and narratives in and of themselves. What the reader hears poking through the surface: repetition spurred by homophonic discord and surprise! the lilt of a Scottish ballad.

Jamison Crabtree  
***Controvertibles*** by Quan Barry  
 Pitt Poetry Series, 2004

By ripping events, ideas, and people out of their original contexts, Barry cobbles together a personal identity from bits and pieces of our shared experiences. Nixon's Christmas bombing campaign becomes a vehicle for Barry to examine her own displacement. A Vietnamese dictionary transforms into an elusive self portrait, recommending that the reader "[s]ee heavenly compassion. See posthumous / & touch. / See a pass. See distant places." Cultural references become the tools with which Barry builds her life story; a story far too personal and, at times, amorphous to be told any other way.

Frances Sjoberg  
[www.bornmagazine.com](http://www.bornmagazine.com)

The best thing short of curling up in the sun with your favorite paper pages is to experience how the internet really can afford new and sometimes better ways of reading. The seeming opposite of ekphrastic writing, at *Born Magazine* digital artists interpret contemporary poems and present them in web-based media, often with a soundtrack and interactive features. *Born* is at the forefront of online magazines with unmatched style, grace, and innovation. Look at "The Blank Missive" by Esther Lee and Chris Erickson; from "Owl Wolf Ghost" by Paula Bohince and Matthew Schneider; and a lasting favorite, "My Neighbor's Wife" by Timothy Liu and Rob Heasley.

Jen Casale  
***Facts about the Moon*** by Dorianne Laux  
 W.W. Norton, 2007

In Dorianne Laux's fourth book of poems some poems are more grounded in a narrative: "The yellow jackets / feeding on the cake's drizzled icing force us inside to stand / under the harsh kitchen lights, then into the living room / where we break up into small groups, his older son, 14, / talking about his first job as if his father weren't close / to dying." In many of these, Laux gracefully transforms ordinary occurrences into sacred moments, whether it is watching a husband in front of an elk, burying a hummingbird, or super-gluing two fingers together. Other poems in the collection could be referred to as "lyric lists:" "Years ago the cat's tail, the bird bath, / the car hood's rusted latch. Broken / little finger on my right hand at birth," and later, in "Face Poem," "Your been-there, done-that, anything-goes face. / Luck-of-the-

draw fabulous four clubs five knuckled slug / of a face. Toss of the dice face." The narrative poems, lyric lists, terrifying poems, witty and funny poems, are all pulled together by a strong music, original images, and engaging subjects.

Annie Guthrie  
***Daily Sonnets*** by Laynie Browne  
 Counterpath Press, 2007

Finally, here's a poet who makes good on her fragments. Often the language mimetically amounts to lived moments, and since they are demonstrative, we live them too. Although she's crafty, in the best sense, she doesn't try to outbrain anyone or hermetically seal her poems in critical-theory-wrap. Her poet's eye seems fresh, and her issues with language seem organically grown from her personal concern ("Are apostrophes incorrect birds?").

The poet flexes words across line breaks to exact surprise and—empathy? The kind I mean where the reader is moved by what is read. ("He slept easily / Unlike my first / notion of terrorism.") I'm real partial to her sharp turns. She makes a run for the real, and her bravery towards dailyness, her willingness to apply chance operations to the mundane ends up summoning a rare wisdom.

Megan Coe  
***The Activist*** by Renee Gladman  
 Krupskaya, 2003

A group of activists harbor a plan that not one of them understands. They are unsure of what they have done, should do, or are doing. As the storyline progresses, confusion increases. While the quantity of nonsense becomes—at times—laughable, the degree to which bona fide politics parallel *The Activist* is disconcerting. Gladman's book becomes a whirlwind of doubts about the solidness of reality and the fleetingness of dreams, which actions occur and which don't, and at the book's end the whirlwind only increases to a tornado. The elusive definition of truth in *The Activist* transforms the book into an engaging challenge for all of us grounded here in reality.

## Coming Soon Poetry Center Electronic Newsletter

If you are not currently on our listserv, please send your email address with subject heading: "please add me" to [poetry@arizona.edu](mailto:poetry@arizona.edu)

# Highlights from the Native Voices Symposium

Photos by Christine Krikliwy



Luci Tapahonso teaching *Fixed Forms and Diné Literary Traditions* Workshop



“In Tlingit we consider speeches to be like medicine.”  
- Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer

“Being indigenous is to be whole. When pieces and parts are gathered into a unified whole, you can feel strength.”  
- Simon Ortiz



Regina and Megan Siqueros perform a Tohono O’odham song to open the Youth Reading and Open Mic



Participants in the Youth Symposium with Instructor Marge Pellegrino and Nancy Wright

Speech...Medicine...Indigenous...Whole...Unified...Strength...

“These local indigenous languages will hold the key to survival because they contain **the nouns, the names** of the plants, insects, birds, and mammals **important locally to human survival**. They contain the names and descriptions of the places where the people can find the things that they need. As important as the nouns are the verbs that denote the actions, the activities, the states



of being important to human survival locally. **Indigenous languages contain this knowledge, this information, encoded in the very grammar of the language.**”

-Leslie Marmon Silko

“I’ve come to realize each word is an encyclopedia – and it’s not just about meanings, but about **where you live on earth** and the different stories, and history and genealogy – everything – it’s native history.”

-Joy Harjo



Back: Delphine Red Shirt, Rex Lee Jim, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ofelia Zepeda, Sherwin Bitsui; Front: Briceida Cuevas Cob, Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Luci Tapahonso



“My father was a code talker and he went to the military and he used the Navajo language to help save America and I think that’s what we’re doing today with our languages. We are helping to save America.... **Our language is going to be key, much more, in the future.**”

-Laura Tohe



Herminia Valenzuela,  
*Yoeme History and Literature Workshop*

# 10 | Fall '07 Classes and Workshops

## ***Meditative Poetry***

Instructor: Matt Rotando

Wednesdays, September 19 through October 24, 6-8 p.m.  
\$150

This is a craft course in meditative poetry. Our emphasis will be on writing, discussing and workshoping our own meditations, while also considering exemplary work from an eclectic range of poets, including, but not limited to, Basho, Rumi, Hafiz, Ryokan, Wordsworth, Ginsberg, and Twitchell.

Actual sitting meditation will also play a small part. I have about 10 years experience as a sometime meditator and will conduct basic meditations that will hopefully lead to a gradual opening of space in our minds for the production of poems. We will also have at least one workshop with either a visiting instructor or take a "field trip" to learn how to practice some of the rudiments of chant.

This class is geared towards understanding Basho's notion of direct and unfiltered perception of the object, and how we can work to clear away some of the chatter that gets in the way of free thought expression. Poets of any ilk or skill level are welcome to take the course, even ones who need to come in all hopped up on coffee (!).

## ***The Lowly Sentence***

Instructor: Rebecca Seiferle

Saturday, October 6, 9-11 a.m. and 1-4 p.m.  
\$100

This workshop will focus on the way in which syntax, the lowly sentence, creates voice and music in the poem. Examples of particular poetic works will be provided. We will consider the various ways in which the sentence can be used to create voice, as well as how the interweaving between line breaks and the sentence creates the music of a poem. We will also workshop and discuss the poems of the participants and have writing prompts every week to expand and explore the possibilities of voice and music within one's own work.

## ***Experimental Poetry***

Instructors: Charles Alexander, Laynie Browne, Barbara Henning, Tenney Nathanson

Mondays, October 15 through December 10, 6-8 p.m.  
(Note: No class November 26)  
\$200

The four poets teaching this eight-week workshop will each focus on some experimental, off-center poetic techniques for writing poetry. We invent in order to get ourselves into

places where we otherwise would not arrive, and hopefully make discoveries and new formulations along the way. Some of these approaches will include or slant away from autobiographical inclusive writing, pantoums, collage, dialogic writing, mixed and cross-genre writing, the visual and written, the elastic sonnet, found material, erasure, chance procedures, kitchen sink poetics, shaggy writing, and swerving toward the new. Following are some of the poets the workshop might read: Frank O'Hara, Bernadette Mayer, John Ashbery, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Paul Blackburn and Phillip Whalen.

## ***See This? The Parallels and Intersections of Poetry & Photography***

Instructors: Kimi Eisele & Josh Schachter

Saturday, November 17, 9-11 a.m. and 1-4 p.m.  
\$100

As the well-known collaborations of artists like Walker Evans and James Agee and Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor illustrate, poetry and photography (and their makers) have long been dear friends. In this one-day workshop, participants will explore how still images can inspire poems, and how words can inspire photographs. We'll review the ways photographers make poems with light and how poets use images to bring things to life on the page. Then, playing with pencils and cameras, we will look at the ways that each genre can enhance, antagonize, reflect or intersect the other. Participants should bring one poem, at least one photographic image (their own or someone else's) and a digital camera that they know (at least somewhat) how to use.

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Registration for Fall 2007 classes is now open. All classes take place at the Poetry Center. To register call Renee or Megan at 520-626-3765, visit us at 1508 E. Helen St., or send a check to PO Box 210150, Tucson, AZ 85721-0150; include your name, phone number, and the title of the course you'd like to take. Checks should be made payable to the University of Arizona Foundation, and are not considered a tax-deductible contribution.

Participant fees help support the ongoing work of the Center and of our talented poet/teachers. A \$25 processing fee will be applied to all cancellations. In order to receive a partial refund, classes must be dropped on the first business day after the first class session.

Will Inman Scholarships offset costs for participants in need of financial support. They are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information contact Renee Angle at the above number.

## Humanities Seminars



### Poetry and Poetics: Understanding Contemporary American Poetry

Alison Hawthorne Deming

Tuesdays: October 2 – December 4, 2007

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Fee: \$155

For registration information see:

[http://w3.coh.arizona.edu/coh/humanities\\_seminars](http://w3.coh.arizona.edu/coh/humanities_seminars)

Program meets in the Dorothy Rubel Room of the Helen S. Schaefer Building

Alison Deming, former director of the Poetry Center and Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Arizona offers a new course exploring the roots and branches of contemporary American poetry. Classes will be structured around five elements of poetry - the musical base, pattern and structure, traditional verse forms, the work of the image, and questions of meaning. Participants will explore the roots of contemporary poetry in song, incantation and oral tradition; forms including sonnet, sestina, villanelle, blank verse; influences of Latin American and European poets on 20th century American poetry; and the branching out of poetry into new strategies in the 21st century. More than two dozen poets will be highlighted, ranging from William Shakespeare to Eleni Sikelianos and William Butler Yeats and the course will reveal how poems, whether in traditional or innovative form, employ and play with the same basic elements.

## HATTIE LOCKETT UNDERGRADUATE POETRY CONTEST

for University of Arizona students

**Entries due FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2007**

\$1200 In Prizes

(The judge may make three awards of \$400 or four awards of \$300, depending on the merit of work submitted.)

Winners will read for the Poetry Center Reading Series.

For guidelines visit  
[www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu](http://www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu)

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for guidelines call  
520-626-3765  
[www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu](http://www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu)



## AZ UNDERSTANDS

The UA Poetry Center summer residency meant more than having time to write; it meant a homecoming.

I grew up in the southeastern AZ town of Safford, but Tucson is home to me for several dozen reasons. Now that I've come back after living in Texas for seven years, I've rediscovered an Arizona I'd halfway forgotten. What I missed was the minutiae. The sound of mesquite beans dropping onto concrete. My favorite smell: a mixture of dust and creosote before a rain. Chit-chat with strangers about which day was hotter, yesterday or today. And, hey, what's a trip to Arizona without a minor cactus injury?

Mostly, I was selfish with my time at Peppertree's Bed and Breakfast. Who'd ever want to leave that oasis? In the cool mornings and late evenings, I sat on the back patio, pecking out words beneath a gorgeous mesquite tree, paying close attention to the locals: lizards, hummingbirds, thrashers. I worked on stories galore—finished some, started some, and mangled some. Though I was reclusive, I managed to get out and live a little. Pulled off a couple of all-nighters on 4th Ave. Visited my hometown, where I reluctantly assisted pedicures at a slumber party. And for kicks, I stopped at the tourist trap *The Thing* and paid a dollar to see—well—I.T.



Anna Green reconnects with one of her first and best creative writing teachers, Meg Files.

Perhaps the best part of the residency was connecting with AZ people. I talked desert-town life with Frances Sjoberg. Watched fireworks over “A” Mountain in the company of Stacey Richter. I spent time with a few friends from the way backs, rehashing episodes from our carefree days as desert rats. But one major highlight of the residency was reconnecting with one of my first and best creative writing teachers, Meg Files, who helped send me on my journey at Pima Community College. She attended the reading I did with the incredible Shannon Cain, who, incidentally, but not surprisingly, was also a student of Meg's. At the reading, as I realized these connections, as I experienced the support of the writers, the Poetry Center staff, and the audience, I felt a real sense of creative community, which made it hard to leave Tucson. You know that Morgenstern quote, “Home isn't where our house is but wherever we are understood.” I keep thinking about that—rings so true now.

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### From “Grand Caca of the Universe” *Open Windows 2006* (Ghost Road Press)

The Nova drags us farther up the road. I feel like we're being swallowed alive. To keep from panic, I try out another conversation on Ernesto. “That mountain's got it in for us, wouldn't you say?”

“Mount Graham, my friend, is a corn kernel in the grand caca of the universe, and I'm going to prove it by taking back what's mine.”

“Shoot,” I say. “That mountain ripped up my body, took your laugh, and killed Arnold. All for what?”

“Shit happens, Jim. We drink too much. We drive too fast. We get fucked up.”

“Arnold wasn't driving too fast. I don't know how we went off the mountain. Like all a sudden the road was pulled out from under us—”

“We were flying,” Ernesto says. “And Arnold—that crazy Indian—laughed the whole way down.”

Ernesto and I had never talked about the crash. Not after I got out of the hospital. Not until this very night. I'd tried to bring it up before, figure out what happened,

but Ernesto wouldn't say a word. Said when the time was right, I'd remember.

"What about what Arnold used to tell us?" I say. "The mountain spirits being gone and all. What if that telescope is the reason for our crash?"

Ernesto groans. "Don't start that Indian crap. Arnold couldn't work it on me and you sure as hell can't. The Pope Scope is a metal contraption with mirrors. It don't do a thing but piss off Apaches and tree-huggers. End of story."

"Nope," I say. "There has to be a reason this happened to us. Sometimes I lie awake at nights wondering what forces out in the cosmos want to off a white dude, a Mexican and an Indian. We're harmless, man. I mean, don't they have bigger and better people to mess with? Why were they looking at us that night? What did we do to get their attention?"

"They?" Ernesto asks.

"Maybe the Pope Scope can see everything. Not just the stars, but it can see the mountain and all of the Gila Valley. The Pope saw us on his Pope Scope TV and said, Looka those worthless mens who canta keep jobs and canta stop drinking beer. Knocka them off the road, pronto. Ernesto shakes his head. "Don't flatter yourself, Jimbo. We ain't that important. We're ants. Why do ants get stepped on? Think people know which ants are the shitty ants? No way. We can't even see them. We don't pay attention." I consider this for a moment but can't shake the feeling that someone out there knows who we are and where we are going. I think about Arnold. Try to remember his laugh, but I hear that tearing sound. Same as a metal monster picked up the truck and took a big bite. I remember the trees spin-

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ning around me. I remember the stinging smell of gas. The flickering of the cab light.

I couldn't control anything in that accident, not even my thoughts. Somewhere during that long horrible fall, I had transformed myself into the Six Million Dollar Man. Everything was slow motion like on those old TV shows. And I watched myself crash down the mountain from a place far away—except I wasn't me in that truck. I was Steve Austin. Astronaut - A man barely alive . . . Better than he was before, Stronger, Faster. . . As Austin, I had the power to stop the truck if I could just grab hold of a tree, so I flung my arm out the window, even though I didn't know which way was up. And I felt it crumble under the weight of a thousand pounds of steel. I felt it die without me. •

## WE LOVE LUCILLE CLIFTON IN THE DESERT



Born in Depew, New York, on June 27, 1936 Lucille Sayles Clifton is one of the foremost poets of our time. She grew up in Buffalo, New York, attended Howard University in Washington, D. C. and graduated from the State University of New York at Fredonia, where she met her future husband Fred Clifton. During the last 35 years, Clifton

has taught in many places throughout the southern United States and recently she was Distinguished Professor of Humanities at St. Mary's College in Maryland.

Her poetry is various and both powerfully personal and pointedly socially conscious. Poet Alicia Ostriker has commented on the minimalist poems of Clifton: "Lucille Clifton's writing is deceptively simple. The poems are short, unrhymed, the lines typically between four and two beats. The sentences are usually declarative and direct, the punctuation light, the diction a smooth mix of standard English with varying styles and degrees of black vernacular. Almost nothing (including *i* and beginnings of sentences) is capitalized. Some poems have titles, others do not, a fact which may disconcert the reader, and is probably intended to."

Clifton has written and celebrated the experience of being African American in times of trouble and times of joy. She has also explored her themes in over 20 books she has written for children. In one of her children's books *Sonora Beautiful* (1981) she pays homage to the desert and its peoples. In an interview with Michael S. Glaser in the *Antioch Review*, Clifton noted that "writing is a way of continuing to hope ... perhaps for me it is a way of remembering I am not alone." Clifton is well-known for her charm, wit and humor and for her ability to imbue her readings with these qualities. One of her signature poems, "Homage to My Hips" begins:

"these hips are big hips  
they need space to  
move around in.  
they don't fit into little  
petty places. these hips  
are free hips.  
they don't like to be held back."

### Some Treasures in the Poetry Center Library

- Ten Oxherding Pictures (1988)
- Some of the Days of Everett Anderson (1987)
- Everett Anderson's Goodbye (1983)
- Sonora Beautiful (1981)
- Two-Headed Woman (1980)
- Generations: A Memoir (1976)
- An Ordinary Woman (1974)
- Some of the Days of Everett Anderson (1970)
- Good Times (1969)

### Not Always Easy but Always Good: Select Listening Opportunities

- Lucille Clifton Reading in the Modern Languages Auditorium (1975)
- Lucille Clifton Reading in the Modern Languages Auditorium (1983)
- Lucille Clifton Reading with Gwendolyn Brooks at the Guggenheim Museum (1983)
- Lucille Clifton Reading in the Modern Languages Auditorium (1987)
- Lucille Clifton. The Lannan Literary Series, no. 4 (1989)
- Lucille Clifton. Interviewed by Quincy Troupe. The Lannan Literary Series, no. 54 (1996)
- Lucille Clifton Reading in Modern Languages Auditorium (1998)
- Lucille Clifton. Interviewed by Denise Chavez.
- The Lannan Literary Series, no. 79 (1999)



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If you would like to contribute to the Friends of the Poetry Center, please contact Frances Sjoberg, Literary Director, 520-626-1185 or [sjoberg@u.arizona.edu](mailto:sjoberg@u.arizona.edu).


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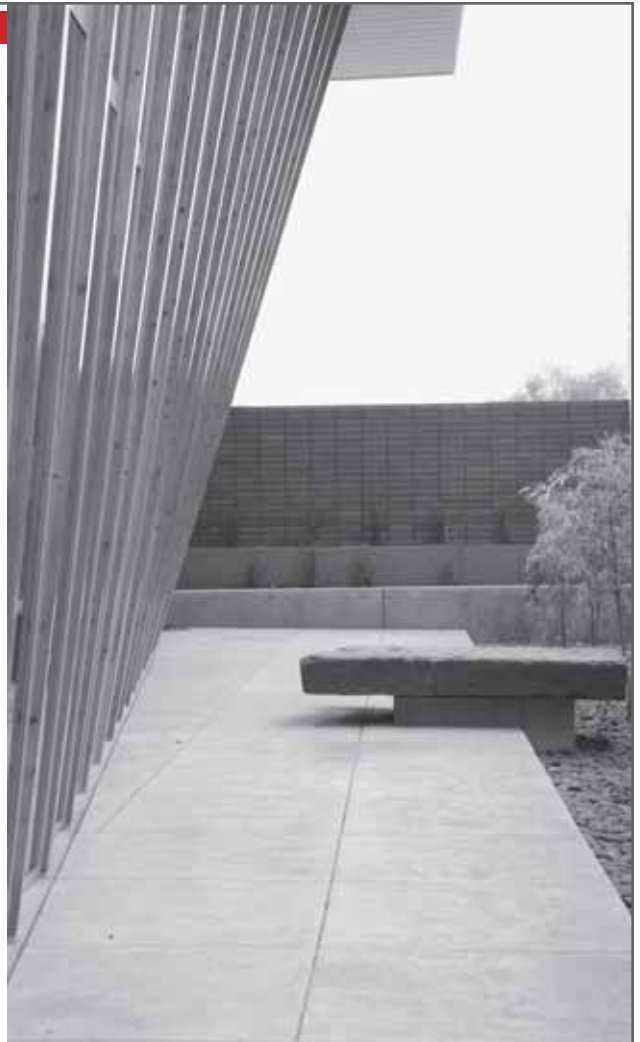
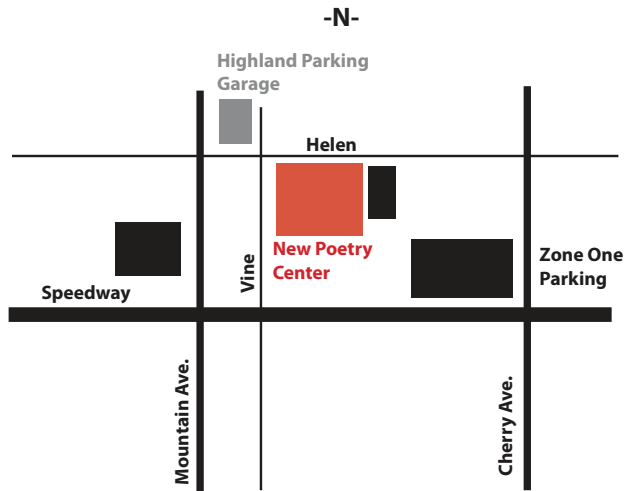
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