Poems from *Shine a Light*
Carole Kim, artist

Poets:

Tamara Tracz

Sabine Miller

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

Adam Rosenkranz

John Levy

Carolie Parker

One day an enormous spider came and wove a web around all the trees of the world. Inside the web the trees grew thick and glossy and rampant, as though relieved to finally be free of us. Outside, without trees, the world grew greyish and flimsy. We were unrooted, and floated about having silly conversations that didn't mean much and which we could never remember afterwards. We didn't actually die out, which everyone had panicked about when the web was first woven, but we were clearly lesser, there was less to eat for a start, and it all tasted the same, and less colour, and a lot less fun. After a few generations had come and gone, people began to forget that trees had once been everywhere. In fact, words like *tree*, and *green* started to be grouped alongside words like *dragon* and *phoenix* in dictionaries, as though they belonged to fairy tales. Actually, at that point no one really told fairy tales, because kids weren't so interested any more, but the odd academic, usually older women with lots of cats and a body odour problem, sometimes drew parallels between the Great Web and the thorn bush that was said to have surrounded the palace where Sleeping Beauty lay. The Great Web was really something. People could get excited about it, which was a valuable commodity by this time, and tour companies would run trips to go see it. I remember going on one with my school. We went by bus, an excursion of many hours during which at least three people threw up, and the contrast between the smell of hot vomit in a sealed vehicle and the wet freshness you could smell up near the web is one of the main memories I still have from that trip. The other, of course, was the Web itself. After so many years, you couldn't really see through it to the trees, though you knew they were there. What you did see was the dew, which was strung everywhere on every strand of that thick, opaque tangle of web, and which glittered like the sparks of a fire, though not hot and awful like fire, but like what stars might have been, or pearls. Since the disastrous attempt to harvest the dew during the drought of '73/'74, no one was allowed to go anywhere near the Web or even think about touching it, but we did all stand and look at it, and some people even put down their devices.

Tamara Tracz

Hymn

If dusk
  spawned a
thicket.

If the blue night
  is my bride, and language
a sapling

  again. If language
groomed itself, or
  it were

an antenna
  unto
itself, and the rain

fell on
  no one's
glass, if windows

  were of wood.
If words
  fell apace

with rain,
  if it could carry
their tune,

if it were curtains,
if it is most awake
  when sleeping.
if the wind
  sweeps branches
into shapes

  of houses,
and we could live
  there after it's

passed, if no
  one died
not knowing

  what is nearly
lost:
  a woods, dark

curling off--
  with language
a wilderness

  leaving
if just one
  tree.

– Sabine Miller

Theory Buddha (#1)

In his first human life,
Spent as an imposter,
Buddha aims at returning
As genuine.

Like most of us he feels

He is a fake,

Always failing,

Tripping over his theories,
Losing control of his stories.

Oh how so much he enjoys
Spending all day in his hut
Turning practice into theory.

And then how delicious to lick up
The theory's residue with his tongue.

When the house
Is sleeping

His favorite light is half-light,
Gentle with the truth,
Not revealing too much.

Now and then
I use Buddha
Without ever having felt the need
To study his lore
Or give up the liberty

To make it all up.
He knew: If he was

To be remembered
At all,
He would be remembered
As such,

A theory of theories,
Inside each of our huts.

--Adam Rosenkranz

the tree
of the

know
ledge

of good
& bad

the tree
of the

know
ledge

of how
to split

wood
for the

fire

– Joseph Salvatore Aversano

one night I x-rayed

The canopy

I had borrowed

Hoping

To map out

The As yet unknown,

Yet red

connections

Which I could also

Borrow for a while

And then diagram

To borrow

The briefly lit

Order

– Adam Rosenkranz

Once, when I was in fifth grade, at night, and my parents weren't home, I was out in the back yard and saw a flying saucer. I didn't believe in flying saucers, but there it was, pale white, low, definitely not an airplane. I called the police. A man answered. I told him. "Whaddaya want me to do, chase it with an umbrella?" I couldn't think of an answer before the line went dead.

Seeing Carole's image this memory returns. I also think about how there are so many movies and TV shows I've seen where people get transported up into spaceships by rays of light, but it never occurred to me that aliens might prefer taking home trees.

This isn't a proper response to the amazing image, it's more like chasing it with an umbrella.

– John Levy

Beyond the shades

wanders a forest

flat three dimensional worlds

to which the body

is subject. The self aside

a stranger

touches one tree

then another

each point a perspective

in storms of information

not a road

headed to distance

but center

on maps of the world

or the local darkness.

– Carolie Parker

In Wildness

If trees
   could fly
and words

   were woods:
night doesn't *fall;*

night rises up the sky a tree could fly

   or be
flown, pioneer
   or specimen,

away from us--

   up there
in the clear.

Sabine Miller

Weeping Mulberry Tree

by John Levy

Introductory Notes

There are eight sections to this piece. Between the sections there should be a pause of approximately six to eight seconds. Halfway through that pause there should be a noise (the same noise each time). I have tried hitting two small rocks together for the noise, but I leave it up to the readers to determine what noise they think works best for the piece.

Whether the person who makes the noise between the sections will also be a reader, or will be solely responsible for the noise, is up to the readers.

The spacing between stanzas is an indication of how long pauses should be. Pauses between stanzas are slightly longer than pauses between lines. Longer stanza breaks between stanzas indicate a longer pause.

The numbers of the sections and the instructions for the number of voices for each section should not be read aloud.

1) For Four Voices

Voice One: the Mulberry tree
                                          in the wind in the wind in the wind

Voices One and Two: the Mulberry tree
                                          in the earth in the earth in the earth

All Voices: the Mulberry tree
                                          in the air in the air in the air

Voice Three: the Mulberry tree
                                          in the mind in the mind

Voices Three and Four: in the mind
                                          the Mulberry tree

Voice Four: mulling over
                                          the Mulberry tree

Voice One: in the air

Voices One and Two: the Mulberry tree

                                          free to move
                                          free

Voices Three and Four: in the earth, free

Voice Three: the mulberry tree sending

Voice Four: sending sending sending out sending down

All Voices: roots roots roots

in the wind, the mulberry tree branching

in the wind the mulberry tree trembling

in the earth Mulberry roots stretching

in the air the Mulberry tree's freedom

the Mulberry tree in the mind

(2) For One Voice

Does a
tree's
seed

ever

sleepwalk

up
through the
trunk?

Its

steps: the leaves.

(3) For One Voice

Is the seed a perfectionist?

The smell of the tree
depends
upon where the nose
approaches. How close the nose
is placed
and the mind.

Enormous
insect

above the
countless

cells
of a leaf.

The breathing
of the insect

and the breathing of the leaf.

What does *perfect* mean?

(4) For Four Voices

Voice One: The seed
                    will
                    search

Voice Two: The seed
                    will
                    search
                    until

Voice Three: The seed
                    will
                    search
                    until it

Voice Four: The seed
                    will
                    search
                    until it
                    becomes

Voice One: The seed
                    will
                    search
                    until it
                    becomes
                    a mature
                    tree

Voice Two: The seed
                    will
                    search
                    and keep

Voice Three: The seed
                    will
                    search and keep

Voice Four: Searching

(5) For Four Voices

Voice One: DO

Voice Two: RE

Voice Three: MI

Voice Four: FA

Voice One: SO

Voice Two: LA

Voice Three: TI

Voice Four: Mulberry

(6) For Four Voices

Voice One: you would need a big needle
                to pass this Mulberry tree through
                the needle's eye

Voice Two: how many stories high
                would the needle have to be?

Voice Three: who would lift the tree?
                with what machine?
                and who would watch?

Voice Four: no, please
                don't

                the nests
                would fall
                out of the tree
                and the roots
                lose their places

All Four Voices: but go ahead, build the needle
                   high

                   let the clouds

                   above the Mulberry tree

                   thread through
                   and around

                   the needle's eye

(7) For Two Voices

Voice One: What if we
were on the moon
with this
weeping Mulberry tree?

Voice Two: Would we be wearing space suits
and weights so we didn't
float above the moon's surface?

Voice One: Yes.

Voice Two: And should I imagine this weeping
Mulberry tree rooted
as
securely in the moon
as it is here?

Voice One: Yes.

Voice Two: So, are you asking me
to imagine
how the branches of this weeping
Mulberry tree

would fall
or rise
or spread out

on the moon
without the pull
of Earth's gravity?

Voice One: Yes, precisely.

Voice Two: Give me a few moments.

(8) For Four Voices

Voice One: Somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, somewhere

Voice Two: In some of the molecules in some of these
                              weeping Mulberry leaves

Voice Three: Is a bit of water from the Nile and a bit of water
                              from the Mississippi River

Voice Four: And a bit of water from the Amazon and another
                              bit from the Mekong

All Four Voices: And a bit from the Congo River and the
                              Yangtze River and the Rio Grande

Voice One: And a bit of water off the rain gutter

Voice Two: The rain gutter of your childhood home

Voice Three: And a bit of water from that puddle you jumped over

Voice Four: And a bit of water from the bright stream you remember

All Four Voices: Somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, somewhere

                    In some of the molecules in some of these
                              weeping Mulberry leaves

                    And in that way, in that way

                    These Mulberry leaves

                    Are like our own bodies, our own minds