

## The Poems of Arthur Sze

[E-mail](#)TUESDAY, 06 NOVEMBER 2012 14:54 | ARTHUR SZE [A&E - LITERATURE](#)

Editor's note: The third annual Morton Marcus Memorial Reading, which will take place at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 10 at the Cabrillo College Recital Hall, will feature American Book Award Winner and Chancellor of American Poets, Arthur Sze. In honor of the free event, this week's Poetry Corner features work by the renowned poet. Educated at UC Berkeley, Sze is the author of eight books of poetry, including "The Ginkgo Light," "The Redshifting Web: Poems 1970-1998," and "Archipelago."

### The Shapes of Leaves

Ginkgo, cottonwood, pin oak, sweet gum, tulip tree: our emotions resemble leaves and alive to their shapes we are nourished.

Have you felt the expanse and contours of grief

along the edges of a big Norway maple?  
Have you winced at the orange flare

searing the curves of a curling dogwood?  
I have seen from the air logged islands,  
each with a network of branching gravel roads,

and felt a moment of pure anger, aspen gold.  
I have seen sandhill cranes moving in an open field,  
a single white whooping crane in the flock.

And I have traveled along the contours  
of leaves that have no name. Here  
where the air is wet and the light is cool,

I feel what others are thinking and do not speak,  
I know pleasure in the veins of a sugar maple,  
I am living at the edge of a new leaf.

### Looking Back on the Muckleshoot Reservation from Galisteo Street, Santa Fe

The bow of a Muckleshoot canoe, blessed with eagle feather and sprig of yellow cedar, is launched into a bay. A girl watches her mother fry venison slabs on a skillet—drops of blood sizzle, evaporate. Because a neighbor feeds them, they eat wordlessly; the silence breaks when she occasionally gags, reaches into her throat, pulls out hair. Gone is the father, riled, arguing with his boss, who drove to the shooting range after work; gone the accountant who embezzled funds, displayed a pickup, and proclaimed a winning flush at the casino. You donate chicken soup and clothes but never learn if they arrive at the south end of the city. Your small acts are sandpiper tracks in wet sand. Newspapers, plastic containers, beer bottles fill the bins along this sloping one-way street.



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## At the Equinox

The tide ebbs and reveals orange and purple sea stars. I have no special theory of radiance,

but after rain evaporates  
off pine needles, the needles glisten.

In the courtyard, we spot the rising shell of a moon,  
and, at the equinox, bathe in its gleam.

Using all the tides of starlight,  
we find vicissitude is our charm.

On the mud flats off Homer,  
I catch the tremor when waves start to slide back in;

and, from Roanoke, you carry  
the leafing jade smoke of willows.

Looping out into the world, we thread  
and return. The lapping waves

cover an expanse of mussels clustered on rocks;  
and, giving shape to what is unspoken,  
forsythia buds and blooms in our arms.

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