

Poetry Series

manny moreno
- poems -

Publication Date:
2011

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

manny moreno()

Native Son and Poet returns to Livingston

Monolin Moreno talks about growing up in the city in a different time...

Interview with 'Manny' Moreno by Kathy Hibma,

Livingston Chronicle correspondent, Livingston, California; October 15,2008

Native Californian and poet Monolin "Manny" Moreno, at his Modesto reading in July '08

Manny signs a copy of his debut collection at Modesto reading in July '08

A Modesto poetry reading and celebration by native drummers introduced this authentic voice of the Valley in July '08

"Manny Moreno returns to Livingston as a published author, a dream realized through the effort of area educators, his sobriety and his commitment to walking in the ways of his Native American roots."

Sobriety and Native American roots have given Monolin "Manny" Moreno the opportunity to realize his dream.

Moreno recalls announcing his dream numerous times to those who would listen, those who would not and those who were too drunk to hear. Being true to his word, he did write a book and is now working on a second. His first being poetry and his second, now in process, a compilation of short stories.

The journey has been a long one for Moreno, his body and soul marked with scars and images of the twists and turns that 53 years have brought him. Livingston has changed a lot too, according to Moreno, not just in commercial and residential areas, but the people as well.

Moreno's ethnicity and racial imbalance played a huge role in his tumultuous teen years and early twenties, along with the fact that his parents, Manuel Bustillos Moreno and Connie Saavedra Moreno died young. Moreno was only ten when his father died.

The 1973 Livingston High School alumnus recalls almost suffering a similar fate, crashing his car on the canal bank only a few feet from where his father died. His grandfather also died on the banks of one of the area canals. Moreno points to the irony of the life-blood that the canals have brought to the Valley and the lives lost to his family along their banks.

With a bar on almost every corner, alcohol became an easy out for Moreno. In and out of trouble with authorities-some warranted, some not-Moreno began to sink into a destructive lifestyle that had him waking up behind bars more than

once.

"Not in the drunk tank, again.... " The realization of a wasted life began to gnaw at Moreno.

He shared what led him to sobriety, just completing eleven years.

"I was sick and tired of being sick and tired, " he said. "Through the 'fireplaces' as we say in the Indian world, I began to see myself in a different light, I continued walking on the Good Red Road, and through the Native American Church, the sweatlodge, and through the Sundance Ceremony in South Dakota, I found strength to live a sober life."

"I returned to these ways I had learned about 30 plus years ago, and with the help of some elders I learned to live life in a more balanced way." Moreno is part of the Yaqui/Tarascan tribe of American Indians.

As a third generation immigrant of Livingston, Manny remembers his early years in the town with fondness, sharing where landmarks, family and friends, most now gone, influenced his life. The most notable landmark, the Cressey Bridge, gives the title to his first published book of poetry.

According to Moreno, in the 1900s, attempted genocide of Yaquis in Sonora, Mexico, led a scout team to scope out California's Central Valley. His grandparents came to Livingston in 1917 via a caravan through Texas and Arizona, fleeing both the wrath of Pancho Villa (who reportedly stole Mexican children to take care of his horses) , and the Mexican Government.

Moreno's memories of stealing ice cream bars from Carlos Market with a cousin caused a flood of other memories to flow, such as the rope swing over the Merced River at the Cressey Bridge, the deafening sound of motorists crossing the bridge while he and his friends played underneath, and putting sweet potato boxes together for 25 cents a day. He also recalled spending his weekly paycheck on penny candy, and the Court Theater, "Where you could watch two movies and a cartoon for 25 cents."

"One day, Mr. Carlos caught us with ice cream tucked underneath our belts, " Moreno recounted. "He took us aside and talked to us as the ice cream began to melt... he was a great man. Rather than turning us in for stealing, he told us to just ask for the ice cream. We never stole from him again."

A friend and Livingston resident Ernie Carrera, corroborated Moreno's stories, saying Livingston held different experiences and privileges, depending on the color of a man's skin.

Now in his early 50s, Moreno has come to realize that skin color is not a true sign of character. "I now realize that it doesn't matter if a person is purple or green, there are persons of true character in every race; those are the ones I call friends, " he said.

Carrera agreed.

Moreno credits several teachers with nourishing his desire to write: Mrs. Craft, Mrs. Ritchie and Rosemary Eismann.

Moreno credits Eismann with fostering his writing talents, "She set me straight, encouraging my creative writing. I remember saying to her, 'You mean I can write anything I want without getting in trouble? ' There was so much freedom in that. I began to write everything."

Of her former student Moreno, Eismann wrote, "Manuel Moreno was a member of the Upward Bound program sponsored at the time by Stanislaus State. He was recommended by Livingston High School principal John Lenker and counselor Vince Yaeger. He always was a poet, even as a young man. I know his teachers are very proud of his accomplishments and applaud the release of his book of poetry celebrating his life as well as the community of Livingston."

At the conclusion of our interview, a red tail hawk began flying above the treetops. "That's a good sign, " proclaimed Moreno. "The hawk is good medicine."

The hawk may also symbolize the full circle Manny's life has made, the peace that he has found back where he began.

Copies of Moreno's collection of poetry, *The Bridge is Gone*, can be purchased from . Manny can be reached by e-mail at monolinpcmk1@.

Moreno has also been published in *Song of the San Joaquin* [a quarterly regional poetry journal] and has been featured on Native American Radio KKUP: Indian Time, and on Native Voice TV. He was a featured speaker at Modesto Junior College on October 27th as part of a feature on Native American Literature and Channel Ten: Sacramento and Company.

Reporter Kathy Hibma can be reached at kathy@.

Manny at Livingston interview, Oct '08 by Kathy Hibma

Confession

Everything has a beginning,
an origin
creation story,
the universe
rivers, trees
you and I.

We're only a breath in the grand scheme of things,
and who one earth really knows where we go from here
when the worms inherit our flesh.

It's a horrible feeling to imagine, a lake of fire could be
where you're bound to, for the moronic way you lived,
to be with all the other morons
from the very first moron of the human race,
there moaning, gnashing their teeth.

Imagine when you crossover
a winged creature shining like a star
will be there to greet you
to hand you a one way ticket to hell,
where the fire is inexhaustible,
and every vile and evil being
ever existed since the origin of man
will be there screaming in torment,
imagine you might be rubbing elbows with them.

Maybe you're not a moron,
though you lived at times like one,
for the most part you been a goody two-shoes,
and for that you think you deserve to enter through
those big ass pearly gates when you leave this world,
where man from the cross will be there standing, smiling
all hippie-like, to show you your mansion he promised
for being one of his sheep.
Why won't it be a tipi,
or a shack like the shack you grew-up in,
who's to know if the mansion
isn't just an adobe hut?

Maybe we'll just end-up little lights.

manny moreno

Cool Water

Summer evening
in the jardin
the jalapenos
tomatoes
cilantro
squash
quench from
the water hose,

the sun
hides behind
an old lemon tree,
overshadows half
the yard with a
respite of shade,

Grandpa Antonio
wearily bends
over and pulls-up
out wet soil
a green onion,
nibbles off a piece,
hands me
the water hose
of cool water
I drink
and smiles
first time today.

manny moreno

Hiapsi (In Yaqui=heart)

I've been waiting for a call from the guys in Sacramento
to say when they will bring their new pow-wow drum,
me to smudge, say a few words over.

A strong rain storm soaked us three days,
heads down the valley laughing on its way,
sky and sun on the rebound
dazzle the day.

This shoebox converted into a room
becomes my universe, from here my thoughts
twinkle like stars.

I live in three mindsets diverse as
morning, noon and night,
in a white world but I'm not white,
in a Mexican menagerie but not from Mexico,
in fragmented indigenous ways that set me in motion
many moons ago to revive and keep alive,
Yaqui / Tarascan.

In three worlds I have endured
hyphenated and confusing,
a ball of rage and compassion
all wound up in one,
and for decades my spirit sings with the old ones,
some say don't exist.

Two hand drums on a plastic bare book shelf
mimic sun and moon, heartbeats of the people
ever ready for some songs.

Across Longview Road a hawk lands on
a telephone pole, stands stoic
before the sun, suddenly the phone rings,
I rise to dry my eyes and answer the call:
You can start the fire, we're on our way.

manny moreno

Liberty And Justice For All

Summer afternoon
in Modesto
tramps piss in
a parking lot
in broad daylight
by Bank of America,
no shame to
their game.

There in
alleyways
they scavenge in
garbage bins
for morsels before
maggots do.

Tattered spirits
draped in rags
scrape along
sidewalks shared
with solemn stiff
in grey suits and
shiny shoes.

manny moreno

Ping Pong

From this center of the universe
in the heart of Livingston where
Twilight Zone can't bust a grape,
I drive through now and then
for old time's sake,

but it's not as it used to be
in the days of Leave it to Beaver,
when ethyl was two-bits a gallon,
a Superman comic a dime,
two-flicks, popcorn and a pop
ran less than a buck at Court Theater,

it's not as it used to be
when my cousins and I
romped like young deer,
mirroring through time
past mom and pop
storefront windows
like Rexall and the Five and Dime,

when there wasn't much crime,
when there wasn't any texting,
when there wasn't any ATM in any store,
when there wasn't everyone-and -their- mama
had a cell phone nailed on their ears.

These are different times,
technology and the way
things used-to-be
war with each other,
and we the people
are the ping-pong ball.

manny moreno

Sleepless Night In Stockton

1.□

After work in America
in traffic
the rush
the noise
the smog
the elements of urbanization
digested as a I drive
and sullen I arrive
slip into my apartment
precision an about-face
and bolt in place
number-Twelve door shut
out the world
a world of worlds
weaving in wrangled
star-spangled waste
whirlin' and churnin' in
a self-destructive celebrated way
out the quagmire of
civil-I-zation
rush hour
road-rage
flip-me-off
bullshit
intoxicated and nauseated
by the animated
absurdities of it.

No child smiles flutter lovingly
arms racing ahead of them
to affectionately embrace me home.
Only the split-second entry
vacuum of variable musty
silence's say: HELLO.
Then all of a sudden
as if by a push of an invisible button

resonates it's fate once more:
This sorry sigh of resignation,
truly I abhor.

2.

And now
I filter into unwinding
easing these insensitive
ribbon strands
of twitchin' glands
varieties of mind-blowin'
soul-suckin'
spirit-chompin'
anxieties
plopped out on a couch
in this sublime rhyme
of coagulated time
de-polarized in a hapless
humorless
hermitic pose,
self-imposed by whimsical desire
I suppose.

3.

And now
in the heat of night I articulate
a winding road of prose
paved with deep fried
figments of imagination
drawn from a cauldron
bubblin' in my stupored sanity
where scattered embers of reality
melodramatically
gyrate
irate
in the echoing forest
of my inquisitiveness.

4.

For now
for the tick-tock being
I whirl

unfurl
in this empirical space
hollowed in grace
for this Is
the way of existencia
the truth my friend
as is should be
as is meant to be
this place
this center
of my world
a spot
a dot
like nowhere else
for the tick-tock being
in this whole vast
unchained universe
my world is here.
So I
unwinding
cherish my soul
so as not to perish from
these incandescent
meticulous
melancholy moments
soothing this bronze mechanism
of my cosmic conscious being
as my translucent thoughts
unravel
travel
across borders of imagination
and journey into thorny
thickets of perennial poetic hours
bloomin' brilliant
like shades of wild flowers
silences irrevocably
lonely
yet lovely
lovely to their very cores
lovely as waves splash
a lonely islands shores
regions rich and ripe to explore

but only yours-truly there may soar.

5.

And I transfix
void of tricks
and soar-wing
 soar-wing,
and nobody talks trash
and no phone rings
shing-a-ling
 shing-a-ling
and no amor sings:
Love love me do.

6.

Unamused
but not confused
dedicated I transfuse
into fuses of San Joaquin
cool Delta breezes
bleeding profusely
through kitchen screen
gently on me
and pitter-patter poignantly
plastic blinds
like chimes
and sequestered here
most definitely
but not vividly I see
the years
Fifty:
bounced
cruised
crashed
and in this solitude
with gratitude and fortitude
I remember
my grandparents
father
mother
relations
homies
alive in photos

thumb-tacked
taped
packed-on
DON'T FORGET US walls
Who congregate
celebrate
in heavens hallowed halls
who joyfully converse
in golden silent verse
who dance tiptoe
on rose petal plains
Yaqui angels
swarm like cranes,
Who knew
Them?
Their struggles
their insanities
their dreams
their sorrows?
their lifetime-agos
dreamed-for
labored-for
prayed-for
better-tomorrows
never in their
dimensions fulfilled?
Them
their hopes and phantasms
Them
indigenous rightful
landlords of this soil
Them
exploited
thwarted,
who struggled
celebrated
prisms of tradition
and cried tears of dignity
and died
warriors
revolutionaries
railroad

dishwasher
field
cannery hands
barbers
butchers
artists
musicians
carpenters
tune-up kings
chicken pluckers
agriculture queens
herb runners
locos and locas
juicers and outlaws
farmers
charmners
nickel and dimers?

7.

And now
One- two- three
Yes
I am perplexed
And yes
still I wrestle
a desperate battle
with the spirits to inquire
to inspire
to address this nonsense
and the rest
and my simple thoughts
find themselves
in travail and
pow-wow in circles
in the wombs of their thunder
and meander
twigs down
sacred crimson rivers
flowing with age
searchin'
searchin'
searchin'

always searchin'
and the spirits responses
wade in glitters of shimmerin'
reflections of splendor
and wonder:
Not yet for you to know.

8.

And now
I explore above the heights
a hawk and circle
fields of the variety
the make-up
the essences
Of who I AM
Of what I AM
Of where I AM
Of why I AM

A Yaqui/Tarascan
maneuvering in this
reservation of modern-I-zation
everyday a battle
everyday a struggle
everyday a warrior.
For who I am
has not
can not
shall never
by the world be conquered
for this is inherently
in me
a cosmic impossibility
a dreamer
descendent of a dream
from long windin'
ancestral stream
of all but forgotten
ancient crossings.

9.

In retrospect

I detect
a wee-bit
isolated conflict:
Oh! What a crazy life!
Rollin-rollin-rollin'
keep them fires burnin' AHO!

10.

And now
the sun rises
bright bold
above a naked flagpole
it's glow melts the sky
a pretty shade of flame
fingers through
the window pane
caresses my face
swallows the moon
and glittering robe of stars
and the Delta breezes
cease to bleed
and although dawn
spawns tranquil
sweet
invigorating
alive
my eyes
care less
weigh a ton and flutter
like hummingbird wings
and my hues
cosmic conscious being
implores
requires
repose
and this beautiful morning
I'll nap away
ride a spotted winged pony
across dream world plains.

And now I do

what I do
hold back that
no storm
ravages or savages
introspective
reflective
twin mirrors
of my soul
but in the hollows
of my battered
bruised
betrayed
bronzed heart
RAINS FIRE!

11.

Quiet
subdued
but not unglued
humbly I say
these words to THEE:
I sing
I pray
my pen shall bring
to wing
simple understanding
that the world may know
we may remember
we passed these roads
these codes
these loads
we lived Aho!

12.

So now
I shut the blinds
cozy-up on the couch
turn the FM on low
catch some z's.

manny moreno

The Scribe

White sage smolders
in red abalone shell
and the fragrant smoke
bows to the ONE.□

Outside in a mild breeze
I lounge before the sun, my eyes
ride a hummingbird
zooming in wild abandon.

I should be writing
stories in my mind
begging to be told,
but this tiny creature
has me captive on its wings.

Who will know I was here
and this was taking place,
for shadows on the ground
have neither tongues nor eyes.

manny moreno

The Tree

A twig from an ancient tree
was planted in this valley
ninety-years and a day ago
with grandparents' post-migration
arrival
propagated with a labor
of love and dream songs which
sprouted roots rich
with indigenous sacred hope
and over decades this twig branched-out
into an ancestral tree
lush with a heritage of scattered leaves

some have prevailed on the railroads
farmfields and overseas
warriors in battlefields
some have crooned and swooned
on saddles of assimilation
not total though
to gain an education
some have hummed commitments
to heaven in humble jubilation
some have whistled weary in whirlwinds
on life's meager means
some have not forsaken
chanting enchanted
traditional ancient
cosmic conscious themes
and now
in this soul-deadening
out of balance Y2K
millennium infancy
I reflect in the autumn years of my being
standing somber in
the shade of our tree;
what will become of it
and me?

For the tree

expands into five generations
perpetuating a pristine
perpetual dream
in this valley reality like
enormous hawk wings
encapsulating us with
a shade of simplicity
celebrated in a social
status of invisibility
and I
native son shy of eloquence
irrigate the tree
with common words
to nourish-in nutrients of this life force
flowing in crimson canals of flesh
in the fertile soil of San Joaquin
in the plants and critters
in the rivers and
pulses of little towns
being shredded for
progress and malls
in the decades deciphered
from a million memories
fertilized for posterity
prestige and dignity
of the tree and landscape
and panorama
of our souls.

manny moreno