

Sacramento's Literary
Review and Calendar:

Poetry Now

December 2005
Vol. 11, No. 12

A Publication of the Sacramento Poetry Center

The Angle of Trees

Across the cobbled street where last night, as if in
a dream, we heard hollow percussion of horses'
hooves echo up the brick façade of the old hotel.
Trees played by the wind from the sea

offer their nightly jazz melody, backed by a chorus of
passing street cars, trucks, the occasional cry of a child
running in the park. A saxophone plays counterpoint
from its Grafton Street niche. The orchestra of leaves

stays cool like dark berets cocked at just the right angle,
like a combination of natural swing players, who
play in and out together as one man.

Through the window held open for the explosive heat,
each night for three nights a different melody keeps
back the familiar like the touch of an ancient lover.

—Stan Zumbiel

Visiting Tor House

Hauling stones up from the beach,
breaking the code of the stone
each vibrating with years,
closed waves and the thousand tides.
The garden is bright with zinnias,
orange and yellow,
and the stones still speak
words too rich in numbers
for one man to code it all,
for one man to crack it all to light.
The flash of bright water
never the same — the infinite puzzle
clear to the horizon,
each day rising and different.

—Stan Zumbiel

Stan Zumbiel reads with
Mary Zeppa on December
5th. See calendar for details.

Stan Zumbiel was born in the
Midwest, but very early in his
life was transplanted to the
central valley of California,
spending time in Auburn and
Lincoln before ending up for
good in suburban Sacramento.
He started writing poems in
1967 while serving in the Navy.
He raised four children, taught
both middle school and high
school, and became involved
with the Sacramento Poetry
Center about 1985. He lives
with his wife, Lynn, in Fair
Oaks, and continues to write.

Eating Lunch at Dante's Tomb

Light, straight and hot, projects shadows directly beneath
where a couple sits under an even row of olive trees
on white stone benches carved to look old.

She wears sandals and a long, loose denim skirt,
her hair in a single braid down her back. He sits
in profile, gray hair escapes in thin wisps from his straw hat.

They break out a narrow loaf of bread, a small round of Romano,
a half liter of red wine in a green bottle with a screw top,
and two plums. She spreads a paper napkin between them,

sits cross legged, skirt stretched tight across her knees
and puts small pieces of white cheese on the bread. The Comedy
sits open on his lap: St. Bernard begins to pray in the Ravenna sun.

Looking for the knife edge of the light, Dante walked
these same streets, felt the same straight sun, searched for words,
found the stars and filled the vast, dark emptiness of heaven.

She offers the last of the wine, opens the dark mouth
of each plum, preserving the hard clean seeds.
Her sweet fingers give him a glistening half.

—Stan Zumbiel

This Issue:

Molly Fisk
Bill Gainer
Albert Garcia
Tom Goff
Anthony Scoggins
Mary Zeppa
Stan Zumbiel

Reviewed:

The Novice Mourner
by Joshua McKinney
*Voices of the New
Sun: Poems and
Stories*
various

President's Message

We've Got Our Words to Keep Us Warm

Only 4pm and already, behind the copper and the fire-red of the turning leaves, I'm watching the sky begin to fade. Watching, some might say, the daylight save time. Yes, it's that time of year when it's sometimes colder inside our house than out, when my little space heater is my boon companion.

But I'm warmed just thinking about the way SPC's December begins: with our annual benefit at the gracious, art-filled home of Burnett and Mimi Miller. It's our celebration, fundraiser and holiday party all rolled up into one. By the time you read this, the poetry, music, food and fellowship will probably be just a wonderful memory. So I'm offering my anticipatory thanks: to the Millers who've been letting us throw our party in their house for a good many years and to Tim McKee and Charles Curtis Blackwell for their poetry and to Mariah Brown, Lesley Cummings, Mary James and John Wagaman (who, along with yours truly) comprise the a cappella quintet Cherry Fizz) for their music and to Dan Silverberg for his sculpture and to all the poets whose books filled our Basket of Books and to everyone on the Board for their hard work and to all of you who helped make this year's event a success. Everyone who was able to join us on December 1 not only shared our celebration but helped support our continued survival.

Arts funding is always at a premium. Keeping the arts alive is always a struggle. If you couldn't fit our party into your busy life, you can still warm our hearts, still send us some holiday cheer, still support our ongoing programs with a tax-deductible contribution. If you've ever been warmed by, cheered by, delighted by, inspired by an SPC reading or an SPC publication, let your memories of those moments guide your hand as you write your check.

And more of those moments are bound to be coming your way. Who knows where or when? Maybe on 12/5 with Stan Zumbiel and me; on 12/12 with Albert Garcia. Maybe on 12/19 at our Holiday Fair when you can do your (Solstice, Festivus, Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day, New Year's Day) shopping at SPC. Maybe at one of the many other lively venues in Sacramento where, no matter what the time of year, poetry is alive and shedding its heat and its light.

—Mary Zeppa

Editor's Note

Some Good News & Some Bad News

First, the bad news... Due to factors mostly beyond my control (primarily technical and holiday-related), this issue is reaching you too late for my liking. This hasn't happened since I took on the publication and I hope that you can forgive me this one transgression...

Second, the good news! And good news it is. First, Tule Review is again alive and kicking! The new issue will be out shortly after you read this. It's been quite some time since the last edition and we (Brad Buchanan, Keely Dorran and myself) are very excited to be bringing this publication to you once again.

Also, as you'll notice in this issue of *Poetry Now*, I've introduced a news-in-brief sidebar where you'll be able to find poetic news from around the world. Of course, this issue's sidebar is dedicated mostly to the projects of our poet laureate, Julia Connor. Subsequent issues will include items of local interest (e.g., awards won by local poets, etc.) as well as general poetic happenings. I hope you'll find this feature informative.

Lastly, I'd like to remind everyone that Jody Ansell is no longer the calendar editor. Please direct all of your calendar needs to me at dphunkt@mac.com or (916) 337-8962. Thanks!

—RMG

Poetry Now, Sacramento's Literary Review & Calendar, is published each month by the Sacramento Poetry Center and is funded, in part, with grants from the California Arts Council and the Sacramento Cultural Arts Awards Program of the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission with support from the city and county of Sacramento.

Submissions of poems, artwork, and other works of interest to the Sacramento poetry community are welcome. See submission guidelines on page 11.

Poetry Now is distributed free in area bookshops, coffeehouses, community centers, colleges, etc. Back issues are available for \$3 each. Your membership gets **Poetry Now** and **Tule Review** delivered to your door or box.

Managing Editor: **Robert Grossklaus** (dphunkt@mac.com)
Calendar Editor: **Jody Ansell**
Editorial Staff: **Jody Ansell, Ann Conradsen, Tom Goff, Barbara Link, Pat Osfeld, and Ramona Soto**

The Sacramento Poetry Center is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets—including publications and reading series—and bringing to Sacramento the finest poetry we can get our hands on. Our offices are at 1719 25th Street, Sacramento. Our phone number is: (916) 451-5569.

Board of Directors:
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poetrycenter.org).**

Warmer Places

for Kim and Bonnie

For want of salt
she licked his neck
and dreamed
of salty Margaritas
and someone named
Fernando,
of hidden hideaways,
warmer places,
a beach in Mazatlan –
with him.

When she woke
the house was cold,
she tiptoed to the kitchen,
held herself tight,
pulled a chair close
and sat waiting
for the stove
to warm.

—Bill Gainer

Deliberate Departure

Assisted Suicide –
she hates the name,
tells me they should call it
something else,
maybe –
“Deliberate Departure”
says, “it isn’t
what it is,
Assisted Suicide.”
Then offers,
“But,
I would help
you.”

—Bill Gainer

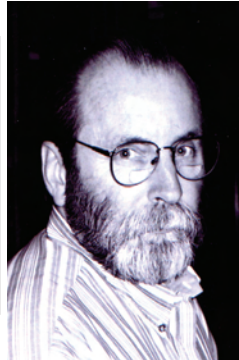
Later

Sometimes
I write poems
that scare her.
She reads them
before I get up,
cries
after I leave
and tells me
about it
later.

—Bill Gainer

Bill Gainer has contributed to the literary scene as a writer, editor, promoter, publicist and poet. He is a co-founder and current board member of the Nevada County Poetry Series. Bill says he has been privileged to work with a wide range of writers and poets, from emerging talents to the nationally known. His work has appeared in *The Oregonian*, *Author and Poet*, *Poetry Prevue*, *The Archer*, *Major Poets Quarterly*, *The Auburn Journal*, *The Pipeline*, *The Bukowski Review*, *The Sacramento News and Review*, *Poetry Now*, *The Placer County's Art Council's "perspectives"*, *The Tule Review*, *The Guild to the Arts*, *Because People Matter*, *The Rattlesnake Review* and numerous other journals and anthologies. Ann Menebroker wrote the introduction to Bill's latest book *Roxy*; co-authored with Todd Cirillo and Will Staple.

Bill Gainer
reads on
December
14th at
The Book
Collector.
See calendar
for details.



A Table With a View

I would have liked to see
a little more of her thigh,
but her skirt only
slipped up so far –
and she was too young
to show any more
and I was too old
to expect it.
But sometimes it's okay
to wish upon unopened
flowers –
and to tip waitresses
a little more that you should.
Especially
when they give you
a table
with a view.

—Bill Gainer

Peggy Hill took a 3rd place for her poem entered in the Inland Empire California Writer's Club's 2005 Short Story, Non-Fiction and Poetry Contest. The poem will be published in the December issue of Fresh Ink. ■ **Sacramento Poet Laureate:** A project of the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, the Poet Laureate program was established in February 2000. The goal of the program is to encourage greater literary awareness by the general public. Appointed by the City Council and Board of Supervisors, Julia Connor is our region's third literary ambassador.

Recognizing that art is by nature a product of 'place', whether it is a place of imagination or an actual geographic location; Poet Laureate Julia Connor's intention is to foster civic pride by creating poetry projects that celebrate Sacramento, and affect a multitude of participants including youth, the arts community, and the general public.

In her 2005-7 tenure, Ms. Connor will implement four projects: the Newspaper Project, Mail Art, Poetry in a Public Place, and A Deck of Writers. Join our poets, the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, and our project partners for another poetic season of excitement, enrichment and fun.

Poet Laureate Program Mail Art: Postal Art, as its name implies, is made out of the stuff of encounters – encounters with time, place, image, persons, ideas and text. Postal Art incorporates the marks that result from its handling and distribution, as an additional and distinct artistic contribution.

A writer creates text on one side of the postcard, and an artist responds visually to the writing on the second side, and vice versa: an artist makes a visual statement to which the writer responds. The finished postcard would then be sent through the mail, thus involving the last collaborator of this project, the post office, ultimately finding its way back to the Arts Commission.

Postal art will include a wide array of Sacramento citizens; encompassing our many neighborhoods, ethnicities, ages and

(continued on page 6)

Literary Calendar for December 2005

Note: Unless otherwise stated, events take place in Sacramento, CA.

1 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill. 8pm, Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

Poetic Light Open Mic: 8-10pm, Personal Style Salon, 2540 Cottage Way. Info: John Hughes, 470-2317.

Evening of Poetry: Host: La-Rue. 7pm. Gwen's Caribbean Cuisine, 2355 Arden Way. Info: 284-7831.

2 Friday

Open Mic at the Barnes & Noble in Citrus Heights, 6111 Sunrise Blvd, 7pm. All are welcome to bring their work and meet other poets!

Luna's Cafe: The return of **Beth Lisick**. Beth returns to the stage at Luna's solo to read works from her latest collection of stories *Everybody Into the Pool* which made the NY Times Best Seller List. Also special music guests and guest poets in an evening of 'kick off the end of the year celebrations.' Hosted by frank andrick. \$5 cover.

3 Saturday

Escritores del Nuevo Sol's writing workshop and potluck on 1st Saturdays. 11am, second floor at La Raza Galeria Posada, 15th & R. Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net.

Poetry in Rancho Cordova: Club Itaewon, 2942 Bradshaw Road (near King skate), Terry Moore, 519-5213, www.fingerprintpressmedia.ws.com/terry \$3.

4 Sunday

Poem Spirits presents **Dennis Schmitz**. **JoAnn Anglin** to give a talk about Ted Kooser. Hosts: Nora Staklis, Tom Goff, and JoAnn Anglin Sacramento Unitarian Church, 2425 Sierra Blvd., 6pm, Rms 7/8. Info: Tom Goff, Nora Staklis, 481-3312; JoAnn Anglin at 451-1372.

5 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Mary Zeppa** and **Stan Zumbiel**, host: Rhony Bhlopa. 7:30pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 451-5569 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

4 | poetryNOW

BookTown, a bi-weekly radio show spotlighting the literary scene, co-hosted by Molly Fisk and Eric Tomb, 1-2pm, KVMR 89.5 FM.

6 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. (27th & J). Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228. Free. Workshop news, www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org, SPC Workshop News.

Terry Moore's Access Television Show, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 9pm, Channel 17 (depending on cable provider). Co-hosted by Regina High. (Sacramento viewing only.)

7 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: www.culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

Rhony Bhopla & Robert Grossklaus appear on KSSU 1580 AM from 6-7pm. Hosted by Brad Buchanan. Streaming audio at www.kssu.com.

8 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged presents **Harmon Leon**. Open mic before/after. Hosted by Narbara Noble. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

Poetic Light Open Mic. 8-10pm, Personal Style Salon, 2540 Cottage Way. Info: John Hughes, 470-2317. Free.

Evening of Poetry: Host: La-Rue. 7pm. Gwen's Caribbean Cuisine, 2355 Arden Way. Info: 284-7831.

9 Friday

The Other Voice: **JoAnn Anglin**, **Nora Staklis**, and **Tom Goff**, 7:30pm, Davis Unitarian church library, 27074 Patwin Road .Info: Allegra, (530) 753-2634 or Betty, (530) 753-1432.

10 Saturday

Patricity in Spirit in Truth, open mic at Queen Sheba's restaurant, 1537 Howe Ave., 3-5pm. Info: Patricia Turner-Green, 920-1020 or patricity_07@yahoo.com.

11 Sunday

Poet's Corner: **John Moreaty** reads Norbert Hirschhorn's *The Empress of Certain*. 7pm, Barnes & Noble, Weberstown Mall, Stockton. Info: www.poetscornerpress.com or (209) 951-7014.

12 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Albert Garcia**, Dean of Language and Literature at Sacramento City College, reading from his second book, *Skunk Talk* (Bear Star Press). Host: Bob Stanley. 7:30pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 451-5569 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

Sacramento Poetry Center Board Meeting, 5:45pm, Hamburger Mary's (17th and K.) Info: spc@sacramentopoetrycenter.org or 441-7395.

13 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. (27th & J). Bring 15 - 20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen, (530) 756-6228. Free. Workshop news, www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org, SPC Workshop News.

14 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: www.culturelover.com.

Rattlesnake Press presents **Bill Gainer**; host: Kathy Kieth. The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., 7:30pm, to celebrate the release of his new chapbook from Rattlesnake Press: *To Run With the Savages*. Free.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

Calendar continued...

Note: Unless otherwise stated, events take place in Sacramento, CA.

15 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged presents **Rachel Gregg**. Open mic before/after. Hosted by Frank Andrick. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

Escritores del Nuevo Sol: TBA. 7:30pm, La Raza Galeria Posada, 15th & R. Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or Joannpen@comcast.net.

Poetic Light Open Mic. 8-10pm, Personal Style Salon, 2540 Cottage Way. Info: John Hughes, 470-2317. Free.

Evening of Poetry: Host: La-Rue. 7pm. Gwen's Caribbean Cuisine, 2355 Arden Way. Info: 284-7831.

16 Friday

A book party to celebrate the publication of **Luke Breit's** new novel, *The Tumultuous Times of Jesus in the 21st Century*, from XLibris publishers. Featuring readings from the novel by the author, music by **Junkyard Burlesque** (featuring Brady McCay, Patrick Grizzell and Chuck Bond) and **Roberta Chevrette & friends**. 8pm. Champagne and hors d'oeuvres served. Free. Art Foundry Gallery, 1021 R St., Sacramento. Info: www.breitpoet.com or call 446-POET.

17 Saturday

The Show features: LSB Jam Session. **Born 2B Poets** (Love Jones set) & New York City Grand Slam Champ: **Tshaka Menelik Im-hotep Campbell**. Guest host: Black Man the Poet from the Black Men Expressing Tour. 7-9pm. Wo'se Community Center. 2863 35th Street. Tickets, \$5 Underground Books or fromtheheart1@hotmail.com. Info: Terry Moore, 455-POET. Held on 3rd Saturday this month due to holidays.

18 Sunday

Third Sunday Writing Group 1-3pm, various locations. Info: eskimopi@jps.net or nancy_wallace@calpers.ca.gov.

19 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center presents TBA. Stan Zumbiel hosts. 7:30pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 451-5569 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

BookTown, a bi-weekly radio show spotlighting the literary scene, co-hosted by Molly Fisk and Eric Tomb, 1-2 pm, KVMR 89.5 FM.

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Third Tuesday Poetry Series: On hiatus in December. Resumes in January.

Terry Moore's Access Television Show, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 9pm, Channel 17 (depending on cable provider). Co-hosted by Regina High. (Sacramento viewing only.)

21 Wednesday

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Evening of Poetry: Host: La-Rue. 7pm. Gwen's Caribbean Cuisine, 2355 Arden Way. Info: 284-7831.

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Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: www.culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

January 2006

13 David Larsen, Lauren Gudath, Sean Finney, David Hayward. Poems-For-All Second Saturday Series. Hosted by Frank Marquardt. 8pm, The Book Collector, 1008 24th St. Free.

13 The Other Voice: Elise and Don Feliz 7:30 pm, Davis Unitarian church library, 27074 Patwin Road. Info: Allegra, (530) 753-2634 or Betty, (530) 753-1432.

18 Julia Connor reads in the Urban Voices hosted by BL Kennedy, 6:30pm, South Natomas Library, 2901 Truxel Rd, free.

28 Robert Grossklaus reads at The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., to celebrate the release of his book, *Kissing Einstein*. Free refreshments and mini-chaps. 8pm.

List Your Event:

To have an event listed on the SPC Literary Calendar, please email us at: calendar@sacramentopoetrycenter.org, dphunkt@mac.com or call Robert Grossklaus at: (916) 337-8962
by the 5th of the month preceding your event.

Thank you.

interests. A pre-determined end date will drive the finished projects towards a public, curated show of the finished double-sided mail art.

Poetry in a Public Place:
The Sacramento Poetry Walk

The inception, design and creation of the Sacramento Poetry Walk is part of an effort to make poetry a physical presence to the urban public. Short poems or sections from the poems of Sacramento poets will be selected and installed into engraved plaques on or near an urban site or avenue of commerce. Over time the variety of work represented would offer a vital outline of the history of song and poem-making in the region. As such it will be the first Sacramento Civic Heritage Landmark solely devoted to the literary arts.

We are also exploring the concept of a Poet Laureate Park whereby a poem of each of the past and current poet laureates will be chosen to be permanently displayed. The pillars will be installed in a park or conducive location, leaving a 'laureate legacy', to be added to by each future Sacramento Poet Laureate.

Newspaper Project: Ms. Connor proposes a local, literary column that discusses the nature of poetry and its relevance to the issues and conditions of our place and time, written by our poet laureate as well as other local poets. This column will be complemented with a selection of contemporary poems, a brief description of the author and origin.

A Deck of Writers: Ms. Connor proposes the creation of an inventively designed gift-boxed deck of 52 playing cards containing writing by Sacramento poets. These unique and exquisite cards will be proudly be sold at Crocker Art Museum and other fine gift shops throughout the region.

On the playing side, along with the suit and card value, will be a short poem accompanied by a tiny image of the poet. The other side will reveal original art created by a local artist.

The Box will also contain a fold-out with information about the poets, and the SMAC Poet Laureate Program. Its purpose is to celebrate Sacramento's writers and hopefully stimulate the interest of the public. All poems, quotes and images will be selected by the Poet Laureate Committee, headed by Ms. Connor. These playing cards will compliment our "Poet Anthology: 100 Poems of Sacramento", a project of our first Poet Laureates Schmitz and Weinberg.

The Poet Laureate Program invites you to get involved. Please call

(continued on page 7)

Putting Food in My Mouth in Their Names

1. Peeling a peach

For my dad with his vegetable peeler,
making his Mark my words! face,
inveighing for the 12,000th time
against peach fuzz: It's like

eating dust. But he loved the flesh
of a ripe, Georgia peach. Would
undress one: peel wet,
even strips till

nothing-but-fruit met
his right hand,
on its way
to his red, hungry mouth.

2. Not skinning the chicken

For my grandfather Henry, the redhead,
who seized every crackling strip
of chicken skin (deep-fried or
pan-fried) off the plate of
whoever would yield.

How he loved it. The crumbs
fell wherever they would.
His blue eyes would close as She
groaned, as She darted his way with
a napkin, flicked at his grizzling chin.

The outlaw of Sunday table, showing
his dear, crooked teeth. Just like mine
as they sink into barbeque: for tradition,
for taste, for excess. For Red Henry,
the life of the family, who favored

his peaches in schnapps.

—Mary Zeppa

Mary Zeppa reads with Stan Zumbiel on
December 5th. See calendar for details.

Mary Zeppa's poems have appeared in a variety of print and on-line journals, including *Perihelion*, *Switched-on Gutenberg*, *Zone 3*, *The New York Quarterly* and *Permafrost*, and in several anthologies. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Little Ship of Blessing* (Poets Corner Press) and *The Battered Bride Overture* (Rattlesnake Press). Two of Zeppa's poems will appear in an anthology on Alzheimer's disease edited by Holly Hughes.

Active in the Sacramento Poetry Center since 1981, Zeppa currently serves as President of the Board of Directors. A founding editor of *The Tule Review*, she is also a literary journalist; her most recent interview, "The Vision of a Single Person: Clarence Major and His Art", appears in the 2002 University Press of Mississippi collection *Conversations with Clarence Major*. Zeppa is also one-fifth of *Cherry Fizz*, a quintet specializing in loose and unlabeled a cappella music.

The High Lonesome:
those high Bluegrass voices in harmony
that will "break your heart, pull your gut out."
—Ricky Skaggs

The High Lonesome

When the high lonesome's wailed,
I'm the root of the chord. Brace my feet,
batten my alto down, tune myself to the last,

lonesome cowboy whose guitar
and grandmama's bourbon
can't keep him

from howlin' at stars. The moon
lights him up like a Sunday school woman,
just a half inch off the rails, like young Maude

handed down off the surrey directly
into the plot. To a man of few words,
and those whispered, as she

took the plunge,
Sunday be damned.

—Mary Zeppa

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Long Drawn

Smiling may be a tradition in certain circles,
but paying attention isn't. Time to let go.
If framed, a smile will last a thousand cranes,
but break in pitching bastioned entities.

Do not forget, your heart is not a trope,
or a virtue, only a steel cage that binds
a grin from ear to ear, with corn-cob rivets
and a pitch black cacophony, of gliss

And color. The glass of frozen glance is common.
Do not give in to this. You will sharpen.
Not to say that it is short. That's wrong.
You are well aware of the length of time

it preys on. Time is far from fleeting. The ship
remains as a reminder of what you think.
Let it sail on. Do it for you. Bon Voyage.
From here on out, you will linger for a piece

of that trip. Sirens couldn't be more impressed.
If they are silent, then they mask thousands through distance.
If they stare glibly, they are bathed in sea brine
and shoal up the waves. They carve in verdigris.

—Anthony Scoggins

Catechism

As we study lists of words, I sit
and nod whenever you ask a question.
Job-like, the words make sense, almost easier
than English, but not easy to separate
from the left-handedness we share.

William Wilson does not share this, the mirror,
the red faces, the green markers. You color code
arbitrary expressions, like "darse cuenta de"
or "enamorarse de" and question my ethnicity.

The opposing left thumbs twist the table
into M.C. Escher sketches, and I wonder,
who is drawing who?

It is a series of words, or questions
That reflects us, and dissipates prepositional phrases
that we incorporate ourselves. What if,
on the subject, "A pesar de" difficulties,
we separate? What do you think? Are you,
"Esforzarse por," by dint of, a strengthless talent?

Though you are Salvadorean and I am Mexican,
we are Mexican, combined. Your feral eyes find
that my left-handedness is not the equal match of yours.
Yours is years of Catholic school and answers.
Mine is Catholic school and forgetting Lent.

After studying, we walk under an umbrella built for one.
As we talk, we eat the words with beans and rice.
As we hold the umbrella, we trade hands for a second
and mention salvation before our shoulders become.

As I drive off you stand at the elevator, and hum
a realization of Ana Gabriel, while my cell phone
imitates that Latin beat. You look up,
then press the elevator button with your smaller hand.

—Anthony Scoggins

Anthony Scoggins is a graduating senior from CSUS. He has recently won 2nd place in poetry at the Bazzanella Awards. He spends most of his free time acting.

the Arts Commission at (916) 566-3992.

Julia Connor

From her unpromising beginnings as a dyslexic and troubled youth, Julia Connor's life long exploration of the arts led first to a ceramics certificate and then to an extended colleagueship with renowned potter, poet and educator, M.C. Richards. As the result of an apprenticeship at the new College of California in the 1950's, Ms. Connor began her career as a poet, as well as educator. She was the assistant director of the MFA Writing Program at Naropa University in Boulder, CO.

In her six books and numerous journal appearances her work consistently evokes the sense of an immersion in place, finding there the unique intersection with memory that gives rise to the poem. "Connor allows the countryside to become imagination and, as such, it blooms..." says poet Michael McClure.

Having lived and traveled widely, Ms. Connor now lives in Sacramento where she writes and teaches.

Poet Laureate Speaking Engagements: As our Literary Ambassador, Ms. Connor will speak at a variety of engagements, always with the goal of encouraging literary appreciation and awareness by reaching all segments of our culturally and ethnically diverse community.

She will appear in libraries, parks and community centers, city and state buildings, and in schools. The public may request a speaking engagement; a two month notification is encouraged, and approval is subject to review. Contact the Arts Commission for any information on any of our Poet Laureate programs at (916) 566-3992. ■ **The Thompson Peak Writers' Workshop** in Janesville will host a workshop and reading and wine tasting (wine provided by Napa writer Jennifer Kerr and her husband Charles) with author Roy Parvin (In the Snow Forest & The Loneliest Road) on the third Sat. of March 2006. The workshop and reading is \$50. Space limited to twelve workshop participants. Please call Dianna Henning at (530) 253-3303 if you are interested. □

Mourners by Fate, Novices by Design

Book Reviews by Tom Goff

The Novice Mourner by Joshua McKinney

Bear Star Press, 185 Hollow Oak Drive, Cohasset, CA 95973.
(530) 891-0360 or www.bearstarpress.com. ISBN 0-9719607-6-3; \$14

Voices of the New Sun: Poems and Stories

Escritores del Nuevo Sol: Alarcón, Anglin et al.

Published by Aztlán Cultural. Order: Escritores del Nuevo Sol,
P.O. Box 162714, Sacramento CA 95816-2714. ISBN 0-9745772-0-0.

It is captivating to go to the Poetry Center, as I did on the evening of September 12th, and hear Josh McKinney raise his poetic voice in such acoustically clean surroundings. At the Headquarters for the Arts, the reading space, adorned with exhibits of painting, is hard-surfaced and resonant, but dry enough not to be plagued with echoes (as the Ballet Building was), and small enough for the average voice to carry without a microphone. Also, McKinney, the professor of poetry at CSUS, is blessed with a larger than average voice perfectly matched to the craft he displays on the printed page. He also has a large following in the poetry community; the audience, including students of his, was sizeable and enthusiastic.

Introducing his new collection, *The Novice Mourner*, McKinney read in his plangent baritone. His is a curious voice, backed with breath and weight, and yet at moments offering an edge that seems all edge. Under the all but cutting power of his voice, the poetic sentences become stylized, almost picture-plane flat in their clarity of structure, in their evenness of rhythm. But this effect is paradoxical: just as Nijinsky produced two-dimensional effects, like those of Greek vases or friezes, in his ballets—intended to counterpoise Debussy's or Stravinsky's richness of music—so too the crispness of McKinney's utterance allows us to think about the richness of ideas, the depth and darkness from which the poems have been pulled. The book itself confirms this impression.

As we read these poems, many of them narratives from the poet's actual, imagined, or re-imagined past, we feel how hard the writer has worked to place events at a distance: in "Gun," for example, the characters are abstracts ("the boy," "the father," "the boy's mother"), the spare settings and unornamented actions cast forcibly in the immediate yet schematic present tense ("One day the boy's father is walking alone practicing his quick draw when his thumb slips off the hammer"). This is the language we use when we have already felt the weight of emotions and come back much later to analyze: by what process of events in a world, by what chemistry of inner poetics or even genetics, were we so overpowered?

Such language, refined to a logic of grief and recovery (recovery in two different senses of the word), pays the reader or listener a very high compliment. McKinney's phrasing invites us fully into the work of reading, since it's human to interpret, flesh out, elaborate, the artfully simple. When the reader moves into the poetic structure, a powerful chiasmus, or back-and-forth, occurs: the writer's feelings generate expressions that are doorknobs the reader can grasp for easy admittance into the writer's feelings.

But there are sophistications at work here, too: McKinney the knower of Emily Dickinson is evident, as with the poem "In Extremity." Phrases like "the eyes wrung dry / and yet :

just here : " have the poetic beat, in units of two feet, of Dickinson's hymnal meter; and this effect is everywhere in the poem. Monotony, however, is never a problem: McKinney the modernist will elide several of these two-beat patterns into one poetic sentence, and enjamb them across the line breaks. Also, such traditional forms as prose poem, sonnet and villanelle commingle with invented forms; yet the whole book's tenor is of steady pressure towards witnessing, articulating, and annealing long-felt grief. The poems are of interest even when the verse is free-form, the lines tentative, as if early in the formation of thought-crystals:

METAPHYSICAL

Someone's life like that.

Virtuous moments
beaten to the thinness of light-
bulb glass.

When we were young,
your lips were a scarlet
thread. They are still.

Late by several happinesses,
our keen perception
sails about the house, all

measure and language like
a shattered vase glued again
with the conceit that binds us.

When read against the background McKinney's other poems provide, this verse becomes more, not less mysterious: is the speaker the poet? One could assume the speaker is the "boy" profiled in other passages; but is he addressing the mother? That idea is supported by the image of lips like a scarlet thread; and yet, if all lips contain their portion of scarlet, just suppose for a moment that these are the absent father's lips (the book is dedicated to the poet's father, now deceased). Also, I can easily hear "threat" hover just over that "thread"; and again, the word "still" is ambiguous in its sense and grammar. The poem offers the hope of consolation through ideas ("keen perception sails"); and yet the thought-vessel can never again be uncracked. There is only imagination ("conceit") to bind past events, although poets live by the faith that imagination is everything. This poem takes deeper hold the longer it is read.

And some of McKinney's effects are of an art that isn't so much studied as absorbed, over many years' reading. McKinney can write in an almost King James cadence, as in a line from "The Secret": "to change at once the surface of the land"; or in accents that might be those of a new English Bible, as in "Nursing Home": "There is no object so foul / light will not make use of it." (Notice how neatly that aphorism reverses the idea of Satan quoting Scripture.) One vignette of childhood, "Happy," knows its James Joyce, yet begins innocent and fresh ("The boy looks up from his army men / on the floor before the couch he is happy."), and stays that way despite subsequent forebodings. When examined for its understatement and their designs upon us, *The Novice Mourner* becomes wisdom literature, masquerading as a beautifully wrought collection of verse.

I've never believed that the lone genius truly works alone. The poetry of Joshua McKinney is surely a "collaboration" with family members, inside and outside of his imagining mind. So I get impatient with *Poetry's* pat assumption, as voiced in a recent issue by Kay Ryan: that the typical writer's workshop is run by shepherds of docile sheep who bleat baas of mutual approval. Ryan was writing about the Associated Writing Programs' recent conference; it's intriguing to sense Ryan's emotional allegiance to the myth of the solitary genius, even though she is too honest to omit evidence that might undercut her thesis.

Now comes an anthology that, while tame in some areas, provides sound evidence that collaboration isn't just for the weak-minded. A collaboration among veteran and less-experienced writers, *Voices of the New Sun* is, at its best, a rich, often bilingual dish (should I say olla podrida?), the ingredients blended by such notables as Francisco Alarcón, JoAnn Anglin, Bé Davison Herrera, Arturo Mantecón, and José and Joe Montoya...the roll call continues until I must shortchange the alphabet's second half. The anthology, as the cover indicates, is the product of Los Escritores del Nuevo Sol, a longtime Sacramento writers' collective whose spiritual godfather is the late José Antonio Burciaga, creator of an "aesthetics of squalor."

Many of the best things in the volume stem from this aesthetic, not because the subject matter is necessarily squalid, but because the writers feel free to celebrate the humble, the overlooked—that is, the often godly and respected in another culture. Through his bicultural lens, Arturo Mantecón is able, in "Ranidae," to examine the frog, which by its Spanish name, rana (not used though alluded to), belches as well as in English but with a whiff more nobility.

Mantecón can glide, seamlessly and ingeniously, from musings about frogs, their shapes, sounds, and colors, to images of the iris (ranunculus), sharer of their habitat. The poem could be trimmed of some ambiguous lines—I fail to understand "The air denied / by the implicit / contention / that nothing / can / indefinitely / fly"—but it's fine on the whole, and I like "staggering, / legionary / figs," for its vowel shapes. I'm less enamored of "Soneto del Alba" ("Sonnet of Dawn"), with its forced-rhyme conclusion; but I do like most of the lines in Mantecón's "Los Estorninos" ("Starlings") with its rumbles of collective menace in glimpses of bird-cloud, reminding the poet of Lautréamont's Maldoror.

I don't mean to single out Mantecón's talent. The late Phil Goldvarg is on view with his "Los Murales," a chant mingling praise for the makers of Chicano murals with rue at the paintings' all too frequent destruction by vandals and bureaucrats: the poem sustains itself by sheer bilingual bravado. "Los Murales" also serves to remind readers of Los Escritores' emotional and actual ties to the Royal Chicano Air Force: Esteban Villa is on hand, with his "Panadería Mexicana" ("Mexican Bakery") adding a nice new word, Mexicatesen, to the lexicon, while insinuating that it is his sweet-making grandmother ("mi querida abuela") he meets, in a kind of afterlife, with each new visit to a Mexican bakery. José Montoya, artist and Poet Laureate Emeritus of Sacramento, contributes the brief "Tragic Beauty," keener and more pungent than the title implies:

...a
peroxide
post chola still
young
and shapely
yet
face
already mimicking
a
hand squeezed orange
tragedy

One will look in vain for poems and stories representing a politics somewhat more to the right; and it seems the Escritores customarily align themselves with rebels (they have my allegiance, while the "genius" school comprises poems with a less "PC" view). So the counterpoint is a commingling of the left-leaning. Not everything works: Max Schwartz offers a shape-poem in tribute to "Mama Lucy" of the Montoya family that could be shortened by half, while the all-capital-letters look exhausts the eye (Schwartz, a photographer too, has worked admirably to lend the book an overall visual appeal). And Yolonda Movita Tauzer's "'Suspicious' Cherokee," written in the person of "An Ani Yun Wiya Woman" remonstrating with an Indian school superintendent of 1925, would gain in power, and lose none of its essential justness, if more of the superintendent's viewpoint were included.

But Tauzer has a rather nice tribute, too, to Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers; and Melissa Bachrach adds a rarity: a simple, cleanly worded comparison-and-contrast poem ("Powerful People") that makes an axiomatic point. This is a valid use of poetry:

Power hungry seize opportunity.
Powerful people create it in their midst.

Power hungry people give orders.
Powerful people give information.

Power hungry people harness power.
powerful people guide it.

This poem, like the best of the Escritores' work, does express fairly the viewpoint of the power-hungry; how many of the wealthy do indeed admit to the attitude uttered in the first line, entirely without shame or even passing embarrassment? The best of the poems in this volume, making it a good purchase, see the world as it is—squalid, beautiful, dangerous—and as the people in it, humble or arrogant, actually set the world's spinning, careening course.

Creativity by Molly Fisk
(reprinted from <http://www.mollyfisk.com/>)

One of the things that happens when you're a poet is that people come up to you at silent auctions and board meetings, or in line at the movies — anywhere you might be standing around — and ask you strange questions about your work. The questions themselves are sort of incoherent, and not that important, it's what's behind them that's interesting. Almost every time, what they want to know is how I learned to be so creative, and how they can learn, too.

Little kids would never think to ask me this, because they're still bursting with creativity, it's completely natural to them. But somewhere along the road to socialization, via high school, college, paychecks, smog tests, mortgages, and all the other responsibilities of modern life, creativity tends to get lost and we have to find it again. Luckily, it's not that hard. Creativity is about your essence, whether you express it in poems, paintings, dance, fiddle-music, really great lasagne, or perfectly timed wisecracks at the watercooler. The way to become creative is to start being yourself as deeply as possible.

This distillation is a life-long process, but it's easy to begin. Walk around your town and have opinions about things. What do you think of that wrought-iron fence, this billboard, those climbing roses? Don't say anything out loud — you don't want to be mean. I

would never tell someone that his socks were a terrible color...well, actually, I might, but only if we were very good friends. The reason to do this is to find out who you are. Do you like the window display in the bookstore? The smell wafting out of that café? Why? Why not? What do you like most, and least?

Color matters enormously to me, and I love the proportions of 18th and 19th century buildings, the gingerbread and mul-lions. That big white house at the top of Broad St. pleases my eye, and I think the government complex off Highway 49 is hideous. Maybe you're someone who could care less about houses and color but can identify motorcycles by make and year just hearing them chug up a hill. Go ahead, leave your desk and walk around for half an hour, finishing this sentence over and over: "I am a person who...dot, dot, dot..." Do you hate contrived exercises like this? Are you someone who'd rather gaze into a computer screen than take a walk? Do you like numbers? Do you like snakes? What bores you? Who are you? The more you can find out about yourself, the more creativity will start to churn in your brain.

Me, I like standing under trees and looking up through the leaves at flickering shards of sunlight. I like the sound of water better than the way it looks. I hate comedy but love wit and cleverness and wordplay. I hate liverwurst and licorice and muggy weather. Hugs make me secretly very uncomfortable, but I like kissing. I could kiss for days.

Waking

He woke in the dark to feel
her changed. Her hip, the same
he'd let his fingers graze
each morning before sunrise,
felt cool, odd. Her hair—
what was it?—almost
like a doll's, not real.
He touched her shoulder, that round knob,
then reached for the nightstand lamp.
Her mouth, lips parted
nearly in a word, as if to say,
I'll be up, I'll get breakfast,
as she'd done for 40 years,
lay still, open. Under their lids
her eyes had receded. He felt
his own stubbled jaw,
then her cheek, her neck
under the flannel, traced
with his eyes her body's length,
the small mounds it made
in the quilt, then turned off
the lamp—carefully
placed his arm across her chest—
opting to stay in bed
to wait for whatever would come
with morning's cold light.

—Albert Garcia
(first published in *North American Review*)

Albert Garcia is Dean of Language and Literature at Sacramento City College. His second book of poetry, *Skunk Talk*, was just released by Bear Star Press. Garcia's first book of poems *Rainshadow*, is published by Copper Beech Press. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *North American Review*, *Laurel Review*, *Poetry East*, and *Yankee* among others. Without fanfare, in the subtlest way, Garcia's poems teach us the essentials of how to live richly with exactly what we have.

Albert Garcia
reads on
December
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- ★ *Not made by hand : selected poems 2002-2004*, by **David Anderson**
(RockyDell Resources)
- 2. *Why I Collect Moose* by **Svea Barrett**
winner the first Poet's Corner Press chapbook contest 2005
- 3. *The Miracle Shirker* by **Brad Buchanan** (Poet's Corner Press)
- 4. *Black Dog* by **James DenBoer** (Rattlesnake Press)
- 5. *Joe's Rain* by **Quinton Duval** (Cedar House Books, POBox 73,
Manchester, WA 98353; www.cedarhousebooks.org)
- 6. *Free Wheeling* ed. **Elsie Whitlow Feliz**
(Towe Auto Museum, www.toweautomuseum.org)
- 7. *Running Away With Gary the Mattress Salesman* by **Catherine Fraga** (Poet's Corner Press)
- ★. *To Run With the Savages* by **Bill Gainer** (Rattlesnake Press)
- 9. *Under the Shuttle, Awake* by **Taylor Graham**
(Dancing Girl Press)
- 10. *The Empress of Certain* by **Norbert Hirschhorn**
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- 11. *The Commuters: A Novel of Intersections* by **Cheryl Klein**
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- 12. *James Dean's Diaries* by **Arthur Winfield Knight**
(free online by The King's English at
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- 13. *All From Elsewhere* by **William Ludington**
- 14. *The Novice Mourner* by **Josh McKinney**
(2005 Dorothy Brunsman Poetry Prize at Bear State Press)
- 15. *El Sobrante: Selected Poems, 1975-2005* by **Charlie Macdonald**
- 16. *Letters With Taloned Claws* by **Eileen Malone**
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- 17. *We Have Tress* by **Alexa Mergen**
- 18. *Bigfoot Lives* by **Crawdad Nelson**
- ★. *Brevities #33* ed. **Joyce Odam**
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- 19. *A Whooping Crane Diary* by **Jeff Ross**
- 20. *Ithaca* by **Gilbert Schedler** (Poet's Corner Press)
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Bottlecaps

The sun melts the sky into the shape of a fried egg,
 and I am counting bottlecaps. Basketball is not
 the shape of my cousin's life, but in sidewalk desert, he grows,
 as *nopales* does in brittle steps.

When he plays, he stumps in brown skin
 around the keys, a lay-up leading him
 to break and twist like a *sacacorchos*.

His amber presence spins,
 his skin plated in the air.
 He drinks beads of sky.

As he lifted his right heel,
 his legs scissor
 and lose the ground to gain it back.

His cartoon-eyed team, they vanish
 from the moment he loses the momentum of losing.
 Their mouths, with music and twists,
 clap as I count bottlecaps and drink.

—Anthony Scogins

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