

Sacramento's Literary  
Review and Calendar:

# Poetry Now

June 2005  
Vol. 11, No. 06

A Publication of the Sacramento Poetry Center

## What Saves Us

for Gordon and John

John, goateed, newly bald, could be  
Sir John Gielgud. Chemo disclosing  
that elegant noggin, that sleek curve

set free now to shine. What a gleam  
your bald head had, my Gordon.  
Of natural causes, that shine. Polished

bright by the fleece of an after-bath towel,  
on your way to a gig every night you  
could find one, after 35 9-5 years.

And how you leaned into music:  
coaxing the long tones out of  
your saxophone, cupping

an ear toward a passing car's  
radio, vibrato in some stranger's  
voice. Gordon, old hypochondriac

darling, gone in a Heart Attack! fuss,  
I, too, think that music might save us.  
Lean, tonight, into flute, into harp.

John, in the seat right in front of me,  
takes his wool cap on and off. Takes  
the heat and the chill and the big leap

of faith. The flutist pulls  
note after shimmering note  
out of her bottomless lungs.

John and I hang  
on her every breath:  
music become oxygen.

—Mary Zeppa



Original color photo by Anita Frimkess Fein

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 Blessings* (Poets Corner Press), and *The Battered Bride Overture*, just out from Rattlesnake Press. Zeppa, a founding editor of *The Tule Review*, 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.

## This Issue:

**Tina Arnopole Driskill**  
**Quinton Duvall**  
**B.L. Kennedy**  
**debee loyd**  
**Arturo Mantecón**  
**Christina Mantecón**  
**Mary Zeppa**

## Reviewed:

**A.D. Winans'**  
***The Wrong Side Of Town***

**Neeli Cherkovski's**  
***Whitman's Wild Children***

**Mary Zeppa's**  
***The Battered Bride Overture***

## Interviewed:

**Karen Baker**

Mary Zeppa reads on  
June 8th. See Calendar  
for details.

**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 10.

Ads can be purchased at \$25 for a 3X5 space. Contact: poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org or dphunkt@mac.com.

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**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, CA 95816. Our phone number is: (916) 441-7395.

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## President's Message

Hello Again.

This will be my last president's message. I want to thank everyone for the hard work they have done over the past few years and to further the Sacramento Poetry Center mission to provide a forum for local poets where they can exhibit and hone their artwork.

The last two years have been fun and challenging for me and have also provided many rewarding experiences that would not have been possible without the help of the Sacramento poetry community. We have increased our grant funding through marketing and video grants offered by the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission. We were also one of 152 organizations that received funding from the California Arts Council last year when their funding in the State budget was dramatically cut. The Center's publications are recognized nationally and one of our former board members, Julia Connor, recently earned the honor of Sacramento Poet Laureate. The Poetry Center serves a large cross section of the Sacramento population and attempts to broaden its reach each year. We should all be proud of the accomplishments and contributions the members, volunteers, staff, and Board members have made to keep the Center running.

I know that this activity and commitment will continue in the years to come and that the Sacramento Poetry Center will continue to be a strong and vital resource in the poetry community.

Thank you for allowing me to serve the poetry community and to be a part of this organization as president.

### Sacramento Poet Laureate on NPR

Recently, Julia Connor was interviewed by Jeffrey Callison on Capitol Public Radio's Insight program. You can hear her interview at: <http://66.225.205.62/20050509insightmp3.mp3> The file is approximately 18Mb. Just type this URL into your browser and the mp3 file should play within the browser.

### Cancer Benefit at SPC Brings in the Money for a Worthy Cause

At the recent benefit for Sharon Wright, the Sacramento Poetry Center raised over \$800 in one night, in part for her medical expenses and also for the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Readers included Heather Hutcheson, Sandi Wasserman, Sharon Wright and Nicole Griffin. People came together at this wonderful event to share stories and experiences about the impact of cancer on their own and others' lives.

The Poetry Center is still receiving donations as of this writing. I was so touched by the out-pouring of generosity and community at this event. This is exactly the reason why community is so important in our lives and one of the reasons why serving as president has been so rewarding.

## Phil Goldvarg Memorial Reading

On June 20th, SPC will be hosting a fundraiser for a book of Phil's work. Samuel Iniguez is raising money to publish a collection of Phil's work that will honor Phil and his commitment to the community. We ask that you donate at least \$5 to this worthy cause. Phil Goldvarg was a generous and giving man, an activist and dynamic poet. Please attend to celebrate his memory and bring Phil-inspired poems to share.

Again, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve the poetry community. I am grateful that the membership, volunteers, staff, and board of directors have been so committed to this organization. See you around town and at readings.

Martin McIlroy



**Seeking Compelling Poetry from Mamas and the People Who Love Them:** New up-and-coming online magazine focused on mamas and the people who love them is seeking poetry submissions.

### Magazine Needs:

We're looking for poems that offer a fresh look at everyday mamahood, written in a unique, personal voice, with a feminist perspective. We want solid imagery and observation, but we also want some level of reflection. Send poems that tell us something fresh about the world or one person's experience with motherhood—or even the choice (or non-choice) to not be a mother. Diverse experiences are welcome.

Poems must show experience with the craft and deal with stuff you're afraid to read to your mother or your mother's group. Here's the kind of poem we don't want: touts a "right" way of doing things or breeds guilt or negativity about each mama's choices; could be printed in a mainstream parenting publication; ends all neat and tidy (and ever-hopeful); is the sentimental kind or anything categorized as erotica.

### How to Submit:

Please submit your finished poem to the poetry editor at [poetry@mamazine.com](mailto:poetry@mamazine.com). All poems, single-spaced, are limited to what approximates a single 8.5"X 11" page. Paste e-mail submissions directly into the message (no attachments please), one poem per message using a 12-point font size, with name and e-mail address at the top of each submission. No cover letters or bios, please. We will respond to your e-mail within one month (but depending on the amount of submissions, this response time may change). Unfortunately, we cannot pay writers at this time; however, the rights to your poems remain yours, and publication on our site will make great clips for your portfolio and a nice addition to your publication history. We accept previously published poems and simultaneous submissions, but if the poem is previously published, please note what rights (if any) were purchased.

## el sol

i came unprotected  
from the heat  
needing to be loved like that  
just one time  
when the hand fits and  
fingers twine to a tune  
struck from stone on stone  
rock on rock

not lust  
but a keening wail inside  
screaming, familiar  
remembering  
screaming

i want to walk straight  
into the sun  
Icarus, waxed wings cover my nakedness  
i want to walk to the sun  
straight as it sets  
and not stop  
not drown in the sea  
clear blue and warm  
but walk straight until i  
disappear

never to have  
the hand that holds  
and the heat from summer muscles  
throbbing through cotton t-shirts  
sweat rising in beads  
running down necks and between breasts  
not damp  
not anything but sweat  
from lust

—debee loyd

debee loyd chronicles  
impressions of life in the  
central valley and just  
finished a four-year term as  
poet laureate of Modesto.  
Her work has appeared in  
*zambomba!*, *in the grove*,  
poet's corner anthologies,  
Las Positas anthologies,  
and others. Her new book,

## yellow

bring me yellow  
take me there  
through the steam of the bath  
yellow roses and Tejas  
the haunting thumping ritmos  
of musicas Tejanos  
inscribe on the yellow-gold  
how much you love me  
To Jackie, te amo

bring me yellow, bring el sol  
right to my doorstep  
leave it, big and yellow  
leave it, on the porch  
be silent be prayerful  
it might be sacred  
it might be amarillo  
bring it to me so i can touch it  
yellow. how hard it is to touch it  
forlorn and lost  
running across the boiling sand of desert noon

bring me yellow  
i can't live unless i see  
can't give up yellow  
take me one last time to see it

—debee loyd

## el faro (Lighthouse)

beckons with a wink, blinks a warning  
flashes in the dusky stillness  
each step as significant as a  
rosario

my rosary - to count my steps  
a bell tolls  
harbinger  
of the way, the path  
up, up there

my rosary - to count  
lost promises  
lying small and wrinkled  
on the nightstand

my rosary – to count  
over and again  
concatenations  
drawn as water  
up, up from the well  
up, up  
a drowning swimmer  
whose last glance is  
blinding hot sunlight

i walk closer to the flame  
abandon the silk scarf  
you placed over my shoulder  
only yesterday

—debee loyd

# Literary Calendar for June 2005

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

## 1 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info, [culturelover.com](http://culturelover.com).

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: [www.malikspeaks.com](http://www.malikspeaks.com) or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

## 2 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Host: Gilberto Rodriguez. Open mic before/after. 8 pm, Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or [www.lunascafe.com](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

## 3 Friday

Open Mic. hosted by Donene Schuyler at Barnes & Noble, 6111 Sunrise Blvd., Citrus Heights (916) 853-1511, (916) 853-1424 or email: [crm2885@bn.com](mailto:crm2885@bn.com) for info. 7pm, free.

## 4 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](mailto:joannpen@comcast.net).

## 6 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents the 2005 Poet's Corner Press Chapbook Contest Winner, **Svea Barrett** & her winning entry *Why I Collect Moose*. Host: Susan Kelly-DeWitt. 7:30 pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 441-7395 or [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://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.

## 7 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. (27th & J). Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free. Workshop news, [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org), SPC Workshop News.

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

## 8 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: [culturelover.com](http://culturelover.com).

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: [www.malikspeaks.com](http://www.malikspeaks.com) or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

Rattlesnake Press: features **Mary Zeppa**, host, Kathy Kieth, The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., 7:30pm, to celebrate the release of her chapbook, *The Battered Bride Overture*, from Rattlesnake Press. Info: Richard, 442-9295. Free.

## 9 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Host: Barbara Noble. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or [www.lunascafe.com](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

## 11 Saturday

Poems-For-All, **James Lee Jobe**, hosted by Richard Hansen, 7:30 pm, The Book Collector, 1008 24th Street. Refreshments. Free mini-books. Info: Richard, 442-9295.

Patricity in Spirit in Truth, open mike at Queen Sheba's restaurant, 1537 Howe Ave., 3-5pm. Info: Patricia Turner-Green, 920-1020 or [patricity\\_07@yahoo.com](mailto:patricity_07@yahoo.com)

## 12 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Series: **Arthur Winfield & Kit Knight**, former editors of the Beat generation journal, *Unspeakable Visions*. 2:00 PM. The Book Collector, 1008 24th Street. Richard, 442-9295

Stockton Poet's Corner. **Alex DiSantiago** reads. 7 pm, Barnes & Noble, Weberstown Mall, Stockton. Info, [www.poetscornerpress.com](http://www.poetscornerpress.com) or 209-951-7014.

## 13 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Arturo and Christina Mantecón**, host: Bob Stanley. 7:30 pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts)Info: 441-7395 or [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org). Free

Sacramento Poetry Center Board Meeting, 6 pm, Hamburger Mary's (17th and K.) Info: [spc@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto:spc@sacramentopoetrycenter.org) or 441-7395.

## 14 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

## 15 Wednesday

Urban Voices: **Donald Sidney Fryer** reads Clark Ashton Smith. Hosted by B.L. Kennedy, 7-8 pm, South Natomas Library, 2901 Truxel Rd; info: [www.saclibrary.org](http://www.saclibrary.org). Free.

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info, [culturelover.com](http://culturelover.com).

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: [www.malikspeaks.com](http://www.malikspeaks.com) or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

## 16 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, **Gene Avery and LOB Instigon**, hosted by Frank Andrick. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or [www.lunascafe.com](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

## 17 Friday

Escritores del Nuevo Sol presents **Luke Breit and friends**. 7:30 pm, La Raza Galeria Posada, 15th & R. Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or [Joannpen@comcast.net](mailto:Joannpen@comcast.net). \$5.00 donation, no one turned away

## 18 Saturday

Poems for All: **Bill Carr & Rebecca Morrison**. 8:00 PM. The Book Collector, 1008 24th Street. Richard, 442-9295

Underground Poetry Series, Poem Serenade Night, (serenade your mate) Underground Books, 2814 35th Street, next to the Guild Theater, info: 455-POET

## 19 Sunday

Third Sunday Writing Group 1:00-3:00 pm, various locations. Info: [eskimopi@jps.net](mailto:eskimopi@jps.net) or [nancy\\_wallace@calpers.ca.gov](mailto:nancy_wallace@calpers.ca.gov).

'Sounds Of Soul' 2005 Black Music Awards at Crest Theater, K Street Mall, Downtown Sacramento. VIP reception: 5:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Seating for general admission begins: 6:00 p.m. Tickets now available by calling: (916) 519-6606 or visit: [4 | poetryNOW](http://www.Saccultural-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)



# Calendar continued...

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

hub.com (credit card purchases). Categories of nomination include: Jazz, Gospel, Blues, Hip-Hop, Rap, Reggae, R&B, Neo Soul and Spoken Word.

## 20 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center presents a Phil Goldvarg Memorial Reading Celebration. Come out and read your poems inspired by Phil Goldvarg. This event is also a fundraiser for a collection of Phil's work that is being produced by Samuel Aguiar Iniguez. Please join us in celebrating the vibrant life of this poet, activist, friend. Stan Zumbiel hosts. 7:30 pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 441-7395 or [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

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.

## 21 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

Third Tuesday Poetry Series: **Melody Bishop Sievers and Gilberto Rodriguez**, Host: Art & Christina Mantecón. Q&A follows reading. 7 pm at HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 743-5329. Free.

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

## 22 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: [culturelover.com](http://culturelover.com).

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: [www.malikspeaks.com](http://www.malikspeaks.com) or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

## 23 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, **Robert Grossklaus**, SPC's *Poetry Now* Managing Editor and Editor of Rattlesnake Press' upcoming *Vyper*, hosted by Frank Andrick. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or [www.lunascafe.com](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

## 24 Friday

Poetry at the Art Foundry: TBA, host, Luke Breit, 7:30 pm, Art Foundry Gallery, 1021 R. Street. Info: Luke, 446-POET. \$5 donation.

## 25 Saturday

The Show, TBA 7-9 pm. Wo'se Community Center until further notice. 2863 35th Street. Tickets, \$5 Underground Books or [fromtheheart1@hotmail.com](mailto:fromtheheart1@hotmail.com). Info: Terry Moore, 455-POET.

## 27 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center: TBA. Rhony Bhopla hosts. 7:30 pm, SPC/HQ for the Arts, 1719 25th (25th and R Sts). Info: 441-7395 or [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org). Free

## 28 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

## 29 Wednesday

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: [www.malikspeaks.com](http://www.malikspeaks.com) or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

## 30 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, **Crawdad Nelson**, hosted by Frank Andrick. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or [www.lunascafe.com](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

**Note:** The Other Voice (Davis Unitarian Church) and Poem Spirits (Sacramento Unitarian Church) are on hiatus until the fall.

**What you might have missed...**

**Ann Menebroker, Bill Gainer, A.D. Winans**  
May 15, 2005 at [The Book Collector](http://TheBookCollector.com)

Bill Gainer, poet, editor and publisher opened the reading in full form. Gainer, host Richard Hansan reminds us, has been described as an "aging angel with an outlaw heart." Writing in the minimalist tradition, Gainer is a believer in the economy of words and often takes the audience with him on a wild ride through a landscape filled with edge, cutting humor and dark insights. Bill Gainer will hold you by the ear. Closing his set with one of his best poems, "It's A Cadillac For Me," Gainer took the audience out in style.

Next was the fabulous Ann Menebroker. Ann Menebroker took the afternoon with the full grace of a true poet. Reading 14 poems, (one of which was written by the great "Oakie Poet" Wilma McDaniels), Menebroker wove a spell throughout the crowd. Listening to the poetry of Ann Menebroker, you tend to feel the comfort of conversation across the kitchen table being shared on some lazy afternoon. Here is a poet of the heart who speaks from the heart.

The final reader of the afternoon was the legend of the independent poetry press A.D. Winans. Poet, publisher and photographer, Winans has done it all in a life full of literature and art. The author of some 40 books of prose and poetry; Winans read with comfort and professional command of language, at times seducing the audience with his sly sense of humor and slick hymns to street saints and other lost heroes of his beloved San Francisco. One was compelled to travel with the poet as his voice took us throughout side streets, tenements and jazz joints. We heard the cries of lost poets looking for their perfect poem, blues musicians looking for that one magic note. Winans read with a savage beauty, which touched upon the small crowd of poetry lovers with the flicker of golden candlelight, giving them all

continued ➤

### List Your Event:

To have an event listed on the SPC Literary Calendar, please email us at: [calendar@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto:calendar@sacramentopoetrycenter.org), [dphunkt@mac.com](mailto:dphunkt@mac.com) or call Jody Ansell at: (916) 739-0768 by the 5th of the month preceding your event.

Thank you.

a new perspective into the eye of the poet as a visionary street singer.

And it was just the night before at the regular Second Saturday Poems-For-All Series several people tell me that Crowdad Nelson kicked some serious poetic butt! —B.L. Kennedy

### Kathy Kieth

South Natomas Library May 18, 2005

Kathy Kieth, publisher and editor of the Rattlesnake Review, Snakelets and an assortment of chapbooks, spirilchaps and numerous other poetry publications, which have flooded the Sacramento area over the past year, read at South Natomas Library's Urban Voices series. Kieth is no doubt a skilled writer. That is to say she knows what she is doing on the page and swims freely about making swift critical observations along the way that cut through the usual bullshit. She is often funny, insightful and entertaining with her commentary on the human condition. Kathy Kieth is a treasure who treated the audience with a variety of poetry ranging from light humor to a darker, more targeted comment on society and its problems. If you have the chance in the future to catch Kathy Kieth at a poetry venue, and there are many of them in Sacramento these days, you won't regret the listen. —B.L. Kennedy

### Kimberly White, Linda Thorell and Song Kowbell

May 19th at The Center for the Arts, Grass Valley

This evening there were three poets: Kimberly White, Linda Thorell and Song Kowbell. Three women, all with very independent voices, voices which take no prisoners. These women don't just look you in the eye—they make you shiver.

Linda Thorell opened the evening with an intense interpretation of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Bells" with Arturo Balderama hauntingly strumming his guitar as if it were a crying child to the poet's own voice. For the next twenty minutes Thorell treated the audience to a dashing display of narrative. It was obvious that she and Balderama spent hours in rehearsal. The highlight of the performance was Thorell's insightful and equally intense interpretation of Patti Smith's "Birdland," a tribute to Peter Reich (son of Wilhelm Reich).

Song Kowbell, who admits that she is not a poet, was next. She puts passions to paper. Her introspections are filled with insight and humor. Her poetry is fast and to the point. Song is a writer of the moment and filled with a relaxed attitude toward life and politics.

The last reader of the evening was Kimberly White, a regular at Luna's Café, who read mostly from the text of her chapbook *Penelope*. Kimberly White has a lot to offer as a poet.

The reading presented on May 19th by Nevada County Poetry Series was entertaining and enlightening.

This is indeed one of the better poetry series that I have attended and the three women featured evening are all in their own way exceptional. —B.L. Kennedy

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### *The Battered Bride Overture* by Mary Zeppa

Rattlesnake Press 2005; reviewed by Quinton Duval

Mary Zeppa's book, *Little Ship of Blessings* (Poet's Corner Press 2002) is a songbook, a hymn to the world, joyous for the most part, affirmative and optimistic. At the end of that book, the title poem urges us to keep rowing, keep singing: "On we go! On!" The nineteen poems in *The Battered Bride Overture* are from another world, a world of systemic and systematic pain, of loneliness and thwarted passion, of hope squandered, diminished and modified. While some poems are nostalgic, the scales soon fall away and we are left with the heart-wrenching everyday lives of women.

In the first poem, "A Living Will," the speaker describes the reader's legacy: "To you,/ I leave the echoes that crowd around/ my bones: sonatas, waltzes, lowdown/ blues and small tunes with no names." The poems in *The Battered Bride Overture* are echoes, dreams and nightmares, snapshots, shards and splinters of the painful past. There is music here too, but it is somber and blue. It also underscores the violent, repressive nature of what is called love, and if an overture is an introduction to something larger, we might not be able to stay through to the end.

The men in these poems are generally alien, some sympathetic but most maladjusted and violent. And the poems give clear testimony to the girls, young women, wives and older women who were badly introduced into the realm of love and lovemaking, who find themselves stuck, stranded and sometimes inexorably drawn into bad relationships. There is not much hope, and when there is, as in the poem "Aunt Lurlene Remembers the Sofa," it hurts: "there were promises/ churning inside me./ There were promises beating like fists."

The dreams, nightmares, and revised histories are devices that help us all survive and enable us to construct our stories in a way we can stand. "Just an old broken nightmare" spells out this urge to relate:

Just an old broken nightmare

you kicked in a corner, keeping  
its hands to itself. Still,

I recognized something  
desperate about it:

flapping its terrible mouth.

These stories are ominous and alarming: The praying for mercy in "As usual, I pray"; the bruised cheek, the slaps and punches and torn vestments of the title poem; the children waking to their father beating their mother in "In a mown field this morn-

ing.” This last poem begins with white pigeons in spring rain on a freshly-mown lawn. Everywhere, if there is beauty, it’s side by side with cruelty and ugliness. In addition, the poems acknowledge what we see in the newspaper every day, that the nature of violence is cyclical. “Where the Apple Falls” ends with the battered wife’s children in their already-formed roles: “And my/ sister’s sons took it all in,/ while their sister dialed 911.”

Finally, while the poems tell their stories unflinchingly, and hope, not to mention joy, seems lost at sea, Zeppa includes the enduring spirit of “the battered, defiant, old heart” that “pumps the pound-foolish blood/ toward the catch in the throat/ for the quick and the dead/ and the lost” (“Osteoporosis”). An overture is also a disclosure or discovery, and what is disclosed in this brief book is that to give voice to a thing is to unburden oneself, and we discover that we are instructed and enlightened by these powerful poems.

### Rodeo Shabbat

The rabbi tilts back his Stetson,  
sweeps his silver-grey tallit  
over one shoulder,  
plants the heels  
of his black cowboy boots  
and it’s soaring: his tenor, aloft  
like a banner. They’d follow him

anywhere, tribe of this Friday night,  
in their fringed leather jackets,  
turquoise stars of David,  
in the 10-gallon hats  
they’ve eased over  
their yarmulkes.  
In Tucson, Arizona,

this temple remembers:  
Rifka and Abraham shake out  
their backbones for the bubbes  
who went up in smoke. Some  
who sway, who sing joy  
in this radiant room, some  
who clap hands to Shabbat Shalom!

could have been shadows at Dachau,  
ghosts at Theresienstadt. Now,  
their voices irradiate  
darkness. Two  
are waving their 10-gallon hats  
for the pure joy of keeping G-d’s rhythm,  
on the pulse, on the pulse, on the pulse.

—Mary Zeppa

### Je me Souviens

Nuestra luna de miel  
and you and I walked  
hands and fingers  
intricate,  
you  
with your vermilion cape  
and cochineal beret,  
the grand succulent aphid  
of the grey,  
imploring rain  
and bleeding snows  
that you found  
and claimed  
beneath the streets  
and skies  
of Montréal...  
you striding,  
at a curving pace  
beat out  
by the double prows  
of your fluid shoulders...  
so complete were you,  
so authentic,  
so sane and whole,  
so incontrovertibly chic  
that all the uzbekh cabbies,  
shopgirls, concierges,  
headwaiters,  
candy butchers,  
quebécois cobblers,  
bibbers of red wine,  
vendors of viandes fumées,  
and ecuadorian hammock makers,  
took you  
for une belle parisienne  
of fine wit  
and smartness  
of couture...  
yes, Madame...  
oui, Madame...  
would Madame prefer?  
does Madame wish?  
would Madame like?  
...des glaçons?  
...des poissons?  
...un plat?  
...un plat d’agneaux?  
...un plat de carpaccio de caribou?  
...un plat d’argent?  
...parfum de Yves St. Laurent?  
...un sprat?  
...un coup d’état?

...bon chat, bon rat...  
...un effrayant éclat?  
...un vers de Nelligan?

And we walked and walked  
hands and fingers  
intricate...  
bergamot in our hair  
and intent on nothing  
but aesthetics  
and gastronomy  
on our reconnoitering  
ramblings,  
breaking our fasts  
with cold mornings  
and ordinary,  
buttered bread,  
all the while admiring  
the fallen cedars of Lebanon,  
the future beams and rafters  
for our temples  
in which we  
would make sacrifice  
until fire  
would become  
our only concern,  
and I would be  
your guarded flame...  
and were you not  
so manifestly mine,  
the very semaphores  
of the broken streets  
of the town  
would have flattered you  
with colored lights  
and bowed their steel  
to the will of your steps,  
and the gallants everywhere  
would have shot down  
arquebus volleys  
of ermine gloves,  
cashmere cloaks,  
satin slippers,  
peacock feathers,  
tuberoses,  
snows of eider down,  
confectioner's sugar,  
blue bolts of Chinese silk,  
and gold and red maple leaves  
from the crenulated,  
brilliant rooftops  
to signal  
our careless passing.

And we walked and walked  
hands and fingers  
intricate,  
like two,  
supplicant halves  
of prayers  
made to disparate gods  
made one by love,  
and the city  
was our gentle fable,  
amusant  
in its drollery  
of Canadian physics,  
forkèd speech  
and shop signs:  
"Le Meilleur Chien Chaud en  
Ville"...  
and in the Place d'Armes  
the dark wood  
and wrought iron  
and fine,  
blank cotton  
seduced us both  
until you murmured  
and whispered  
all praise and longing  
for fear of rousing  
and bringing to mind  
our homely realities,  
and we lived there  
and lay there...  
you in bed  
like a fruited trilogy,  
three stories told in lime,  
berry and mango,  
and in the immense bed  
a book of Kama,  
a sweet sutra  
of running chocolate  
and breathless peppermint,  
and in the bed without end  
a philosophical book  
concerning a starving  
bengal tiger  
and a shipwrecked,  
telepathic, hindu boy...  
a book of relativistic  
zoology,  
of magic flotsam  
and supernatural jetsam,  
a book of the absolute soul  
of Brahma in Pondicherry  
and Toronto, Ontario...  
and through it all

your lips were numbed  
and your skin was flayed  
and laid open  
by the opiates  
of your own artifice,  
as we consumed  
our feast of nights  
in the Place d'Armes.

And we walked and walked,  
stark and phenomenal,  
enlightened and evoked  
into our own,  
speculative duality  
of tongues,  
family,  
food and skin,  
mingled now  
like our very names,  
like our ascending blood,  
like that very  
incongruent intricacy,  
of our conjugal  
fingers and hands.

—Arturo Mantecón

Arturo Mantecón was born north of Mexico in Laredo, Texas and grew up north of Canada in Detroit, Michigan. He always wanted to be a writer of some sort. For a while he thought he'd be a newspaper reporter. He went to school and ended up a state worker despite better intentions. He started writing short stories in his late thirties and had some success, getting published and winning an award or two... well, maybe just one. Art Mantecón began writing poetry after Francisco Alarcón, who had never even heard him read a poem, insisted that he was a poet. He figured Francisco knew what he was talking about (and that if he didn't know what he was talking about, it would do minimal harm) and has been writing poetry ever since. Some people like his poetry. Some people like him, in addition to liking his poetry. De gustibus... He should be taken at face value. It is recommended that his poetry should not be, but you can take it or leave it without having to worry about whether there is any meaning to it at all, superficial or deep. His one great tautological accomplishment was marrying his wife.... His ambition is to be a good husband and a good father and to some day race the tide at Mont Saint Michel where Arthur slew the terrible giant.



## Crossing

I will make a sea from the tear of your departure.  
I will build a raft  
of bamboo and shoelaces,  
fashion a mast of candle wax,  
and for a sail,  
shirr up the black stockings  
you loved me in and out of.  
I'll wade to my hips,  
shove off the balls of my feet,  
steer my craft towards breakers,  
cross them and toss the oars  
like coffee spoons into the foam.  
When the wind won't rise,  
I'll sit lotus,  
peel oranges,  
and string a necklace of their taut skins.  
I'll wail at the moon's dead fish eye,  
tear the dress from my shoulders,  
drink salt water,  
jump overboard.  
I'll dive deep,  
walk one thousand miles  
through jungle,  
across tundra and desert  
on the sea floor.  
I'll suck the soft bodies of clams,  
mount a tortoise and ride him—  
Godiva with free hair.  
I'll plunder the boneyards of humpbacks,  
eat calcium, and carry their ghosts with me  
to the surface.  
There,  
I'll float on my back, six days adrift in the tiger's paw—  
Until my belly blisters, and I lose my skin to the water.  
The sun  
will spill  
red ribbons  
into a tall, gray glass.  
Resurrected,  
the moon will rise on a ladder out of the dark well.  
Then will I raise my face to the  
cold, bone moon,  
and stand  
in the low tide  
of a new shore,  
naked to night's slow hand.  
I will make a sea from the tear of your departure.  
  
And I will cross it.

—Christina Mantecón

Christina Mantecón is currently in the process of pulling up the stakes of the homestead she shares with her husband, the poet Arturo Mantecón, and moving the entire operation from Elk Grove to Davis. Their caravan includes their kids Andy, Chris, and Jenny, an arthritic Labrador named Kali, two cats, and a Siamese fighting fish. She recently completed her MA in English and a collection of poetry entitled *Full Breast Moon*. When she's not writing or unpacking—which should occupy the better part of the summer—she's roasting red bell peppers, or shredding credit card offers for the recycling bin, or dreaming of taking off the ten pounds that would let her get into all those clothes she used to wear before she was happily married.

Arturo and Christina Mantecón read together on June 13th. See calendar for details.

*Whitman's Wild Children* by Neeli Cherkovski

Steerforth Press \$18.00 ISBN 1-8836-42-86-8

Reviewed by B. L. Kennedy (courtesy of Rattlesnake Press)

Recently, while in dialogue with Frank Andrick on the poetics and literature of the late Philip Lamantia, the subject of poets' lives came into focus. The life and trials of the writing life have always held a special place in my heart. There are so many biographies written and so many unwritten of novelists, poets, dramatists, known, unknown and yet to be discovered, that it often overwhelms my mind and book budget.

This brings us to a fine volume titled *Whitman's Wild Children* written by poet/teacher Neeli Cherkovski, originally published in 1988 in a slightly different form by The Lapis Press in both hardback and trade-paper editions. The book looks at the lives of twelve contemporary beat poets: Allen Ginsberg, Philip Lamantia, Bob Kaufman, Michael McClure, Charles Bukowski, John Wieners, James Broughton, William Everson, Gregory Corso, Harold Norse, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Jack Micheline. However, I must add that the label "Beat" does not, in the opinion of this reviewer, apply to many of the poets included within the pages of this book. I can never consider Philip Lamantia or William Everson "Beat" poets. And I find it sad that the book does not include any of the great women writers of the era.

However, Neeli Cherkovski has done a wonderful job in having chosen the poets included within these pages. For, like Whitman, each poet here has taken "his own road" and has

had little to do with what was thought to be mainstream. I have found Cherkovski to be passionate and insightful, scholarly and sympathetic in these biographical portraits of poets that he has encountered, often treating the reader to an excellent understanding of both the life and craft of the writer.

*Whitman's Wild Children* is more than memoir. It is an engaging critical study, which illuminates the life and struggle of the poet in America. I strongly suggest this book to any student of contemporary literature or anyone with an interest in the so-called "Beat Generation" that drafts beyond the standard reading. Neeli Cherkoski has given us a book that serves with great importance the study of poetry as craft and the life of the poet as art unto itself. I applaud Steerforth Press reissuing this fine book and Neeli Cherkovski for bringing a revised edition of *Whitman's Wild Children* into your local bookstore.

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*The Wrong Side Of Town* by A.D. Winans  
(Bilingual Edition) Translated into Russian by Aleksey Dayen  
Cross-Cultural Communications Merrick, New York, 2005  
ISBN 0-8904-787-2 \$10.00  
Reviewed by B. L. Kennedy (courtesy of Rattlesnake Press)

A.D. Winans is a legend in the world of poetry and independent press publishing, having authored over the years some 41 assorted volumes of poetry and prose. Winans has been active not only as a writer but as editor, publisher and historical archivist in the realm of contemporary American Literature and the world of the Independent Press keeping the flame burning and its voices alive.

A new book by this unique poet is always a reason to celebrate and, with the publication of *The Wrong Side Of Town* (Special Bilingual Edition) translated by Aleksey Dayen, the reader of these poems will find many reasons to celebrate.

From its first poem, "City Poet," Winans draws the reader into his world, sets the tone of the journey which we (the readers) shall soon embark upon with the careful guidance of the poet.

"Once addiction sets in  
There's no stopping it"

The poet accommodates the readers, takes them into a slaughterhouse of heart and mind. With these poems there is no need for phony cinema projection or fakery. The only anticipation here is what we see in the mirror each morning of each day and the writer of these poems makes damn sure that the reader knows the rules of the game.

We walk streets, experience the daily rush of the city as it undresses before us, yet always pushing us back behind its various barriers with swirling incantations, with its numerous demons and angels. Take into consideration the poem "Eastern Zen And Pig Zen" in which the poet talks of his beloved San Francisco and the cultural changes that the city has endured over the last 30 years:

"San Francisco ain't what  
she used to be  
not for you not for me  
They have taken the  
beat out of Beat"

*The Wrong Side Of Town* takes its reader on a journey of places and faces. We travel down Market Street, experience the beauty of the Embassy Theatre. Poems are dedicated or written for such iconic cultural luminaries as neuro-novelist William S. Burroughs and jazz master Charles Mingus. The poet Winans invokes the dead Ezra Pound, Marilyn Monroe and even Santa Claus!

The book is dedicated to the late San Francisco poet Bob Kaufman. This reviewer feels that the late poet would be proud to have his name attached to a book as *The Wrong Side Of Town*. This is A.D. Winans at his very best.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept poetry, book reviews, event commentary, poetry-related articles and interviews. Accompanying these with short biographies and pictures (B&W or high-contrast color JPEGs are preferred) is welcomed. Please submit 3-6 poems at a time. Email submissions of poetry are not encouraged. Please send your work along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

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## **Karen Baker with Tina Arnopole Driskill**

Tina Arnopole Driskill is a poet and journalist from Modesto, California. She is responsible for "A Gathering of Voices" poetry column in *Stanislaus Connections*, a Modesto Peace/Life Center publication. Here she interviews Karen Baker about her first chapbook, *Vocal Exercises in Stone*, published by Rattlesnake Press

**Tina:** What are your writing goals?

**Karen:** Writing practice for me is like a chapel without walls with its own time frame. What I write about is what I have grown to experience, even when I'm writing about the past or future. The poem ideally is the experience. I have to balance emotional, exhibitional writing with a precise stepping into experience with words. Sometimes drama catches the attention but isn't a complete meal.

**Tina:** What were the predominant influences on your creative process?

**Karen:** My mother read me nursery rhymes and fairy tales and liked to play creatively, taught me knitting and sewing and mushroom hunting. My father was a director at the YMCA, was creative with people, individually and in groups. He developed programs and classes and did free lance counseling of young people. So I like to blend creativity and community in my writing. Writing groups are a second family. I am in three groups: an unnamed group of women, the Licensed Fools, and AWG (Another Writing Group).

Writing in community was modeled by Elsie Bishoff, my English, Creative Writing teacher in junior high school, who would take us on writing trips to the Indian mounds in Rockford, Illinois or to Blackhawk State Park. She had family picnics for her homeroom class so we could meet everyone's family. Sometimes a few words of support for a writer plant seeds that germinate many years later. These were given to me by Mrs. Bishoff and others.

**Tina:** What factors went into the development of this chapbook?

**Karen:** This chapbook has been the result of a serendipitous process that began in the spring of 2004 with my commitment to sharing my poems with a larger audience than the writing groups in which I participate. The theme of stones (*Vocal Exercises in Stone*) began with a spur of the moment trip to my girlhood home in Rockford, Illinois, on the Rock River. I looked across the river from my home, which I hadn't visited in 30 years, and was surprised to see my name, Karen, spelled out in large round river rocks on the sloping lawn.

Later in the year I met with friends who encouraged me to send out my work. A reading at the Mistlin Gallery in Modesto, a mountain writing retreat, and some poems sent to Kathy Kieth at Rattlesnake Press opened the door to the print-

ing of the chapbook.

The title of the book came from a poem I wrote inspired by the stone-like sculpture pictured on the cover. I was at a dream study group in Davis when the sculpture was pointed out to me. It was created by my friend Adair MacEachern's mother, Charlie. I wrote a poem about it and Debbie Loyd suggested I use the title of the poem as the chapbook title.

## **Recently Released/Available Again:**

1. *Vocal Exercises In Stone* by Karen Baker
2. *Why I Collect Moose* by Svea Barrett
3. *Leaning Against Time* by Neeli Cherkovski
4. *Roxy* by Todd Cirillo, W.S. Gainer, & Will Staple
5. *Bone Sprockets* by G.O. Clark
6. *The Other Side of the Lens* by G. O. Clark
7. *A Box Full of Alien Skies* by G.O. Clark
8. *Selected Poems 1972-2005* by Eric Greinke
9. *Littlesnake Broadside #11:*
10. *Skin Tax* by Tim Z. Hernandez
11. *The Poetic Light* by John A. Hughes
12. *Been Born Bronx* by B.L. Kennedy
13. *After Modigliani* by Stephen Kessler
14. *Tell it to the Rabbis and Other Poems 1977-2000* by Stephen Kessler
15. *Why We Have Sternums* by Kathy Kieth
16. *Rattlesnake Review #6* ed. Kathy Kieth
17. *Snakeletes #4* ed. Kathy Kieth
18. *noon, twilight, midnight* by Debbie Loyd
19. *All From Elsewhere* by William Ludington
20. *El Sobrante: Selected Poems, 1975-2005* by Charlie Macdonald
21. *tiny teeth: The Wormwood Review Poems* by Ann Menebroker
22. *The White Bone Harp* by Barbara O'Donnell
23. *Lost Sould Child* by Barbara O'Donnell
24. *Dreamwalker* by Barbara O'Donnell
25. *The Town* by Barbara O'Donnell
26. *A Sense of Melancholy* by Joyce Odam
27. *Brevities #26 & #27* ed. Joyce Odam
28. *Some Rhyming Lines About Felines* by Liz Purcell
29. *A Whooping Crane Diary* by Jeff Ross
30. *The Common Fire* by Shelley Sevren
31. *Priorities* CD by Straight Out Scribes:  
(916) 452-1290 or [straightoutscribes@yahoo.com](mailto:straightoutscribes@yahoo.com)
32. *Mudsong* by Michael Spring
33. *Greatest Hits 1981-2004* by Hannah Stein
34. *On Tuesday, When the Homeless Disappeared* by Marcos McPeck Villatoro
35. *The Wrong Side of Town* by A.D. Winans  
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