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# FIRST DRAFT

*The Journal of the  
Alabama Writers' Forum*



**APRIL IS NATIONAL  
POETRY MONTH**

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**POETS TED WOROZBYT AND NATASHA TRETHERWEY  
ALABAMA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS'  
FELLOWS IN LITERATURE**

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As unlikely as it may seem, we here at *First Draft* have never tackled National Poetry Month as a theme for our spring issue, so when we learned that the 2000 ASCA Artist Fellowship Recipients in Literature were both poets, we decided it was time. Our cover story features poets Natasha Trethewey and Ted Worozbyt. I know you will enjoy reading about their work and what these fellowships will mean to them.

All the focus on poetry in America this month keeps taking me back to my original favorite poem, which is one that many others claim too: T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Although I once had a bitter argument with a creative writing school colleague about how to teach this poem—each of us feeling that our own particular sense of Prufrock was the only way to read him—what brings me back to this poem is not what it means but how it *sounds*.

When I was a high school junior, I discovered the magical sounds of this poem, and I loved to sprawl out on my bed in secret and read it aloud to myself. I had no idea why this strange man was talking about mermaids or walking on oyster shell streets, or why he hung out with such moody women, but I loved



Jeanie Thompson

the lingering mystery and incantatory sound of his words. I was intoxicated by them. We know instinctively, and we're taught, that poetry transforms us and makes us feel human. In those early days, Eliot's lines made me feel something which I only dimly understood at the time was part of my humanity.

I go back to the poem for a taste of that early recognition and that early invitation to the mystery and pleasures of poetry.

Each of you has your own poem that transformed you. I suggest that you go back to that poem this month, hole up with it alone, and read it to yourself. Savor it. Then find someone you love or trust, or a young friend just starting to write who will put up with you, and read it to that person. If the person that you would like to hear it is far away, record the poem on tape or send a long, mysterious poem/voicemail. What a great poetry month gift!

So here is our gift to you—an issue for April that is full of poetry in Alabama. Take time to listen.

Jeanie Thompson  
Executive Director

Cover photograph by Chip Cooper, director of photography, University Relations, and adjunct instructor in photography at The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. His books include *Silent in the Land*, *Hunting: the Southern Tradition* and *Alabama Memories*.

*First Draft* is a vehicle for communication among writers and those interested in literature/publishing in Alabama and elsewhere. We encourage publication news, events information, and story suggestions. *First Draft* will grow as the needs of writers in Alabama are identified.

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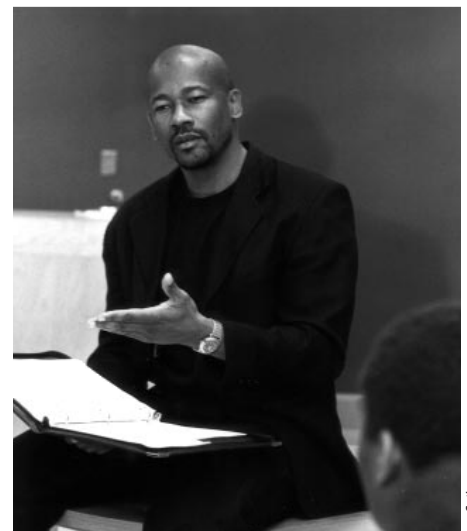
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Joy Sailors



# A Couplet of Fellowships

BY ZACHARY MICHAEL JACKS

**F**or Alabama poets Ted Worozbyt and Natasha Trethewey, being awarded Fellowships in Literature from the Alabama State Council on the Arts (ASCA) in 1999 is a matter both sublime and practical.

“A writer’s worst enemy is worry,” Worozbyt, an instructor of English at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, says. “The worst kind of worry is money.” Calling the Arts Council grant “a whole lot of groceries,” Worozbyt feels a debt of gratitude to the Council as he looks forward to a summer of intensive writing.

For Natasha Trethewey, assistant professor of English at Auburn University, the fellowship offers similar relief. She plans to use the funds to buy her first home computer, and looks forward to a productive summer of writing supported by the grant money. It is, as well, another step toward artistic autonomy for this daughter of well-known poet Eric Trethewey. The first step was the selection of her manuscript by Rita Dove for the Cave Canem Poetry Prize for a first book. The book, *Domestic Work*, is being published by Graywolf Press and will be available September 1, 2000.

For both poets, the award has much to do with validation in a field that Worozbyt calls “the most marginal of the arts.” As someone who makes his living as a teacher, Worozbyt usually thinks twice about calling himself a poet. “When people come up and ask what I do, I say I teach at the University of Alabama. If they press me further, I tell them what I teach. If they press me further still, I tell them I occasionally versify. And, if that’s not enough, I tell them to consult the MLA bibliography and let me get another drink!”

It is particularly gratifying to Trethewey to have her talent acknowledged in a Deep South state. “When I left Massachusetts, I didn’t know whether there would be a literary community here. I’ve been amazed at what exists. . . I feel supported both financially and morally,” she says.

Both fellowship winners acknowledge deep, strong family ties as seminal to their work.

## THEODORE “TED” WOROZBYT

Your mother cooked the schquatki, you climbed the stool to watch  
minced salt-fat render and disappear, the onions  
deepen their color to a black caramel.  
The streets in Warsaw boiled

with the dead, and the hungry enough  
to be dead. . .

*from “Past Naming” by Ted Worozbyt*



Theodore Worozbyt and Natasha Trethewey

Chip Cooper

Born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1960, Worozbyt (pronounced “VO-rose-bit”) grew up infused with the character of his grandfather, John Benny Worozbyt, a Ukrainian immigrant and highly decorated World War I hero, whom he visited frequently as a child. “He loomed pretty large in my psyche,” Worozbyt said. “He was always sort of a paradox. He had this heroic mythos, and yet he was still the sort of man who would open the screen door to shoo out a fly.”

John Benny Worozbyt died when Ted was 21, remaining reticent to the end about his life during World War I, during which he fought as an American soldier. “I don’t remember talking to him about his war experience much. In fact, I don’t recall seeing the medals more than once,” Worozbyt said.

In the poem “Visitors,” which first appeared in *Poetry* magazine, the speaker attempts to define himself and his generation, concluding “So that’s where I come in, at the tail end/ of a slick, confident song, missing the chance/ I missed by random cosmic accident, to know them/ as I know the kids I went to school with, which is to say: then, once, and iridescently.”

As his grandfather had, Worozbyt worked to support himself from a young age. He held a series of positions—including busboy, chef, and bookstore manager—in the time between his first job, at sixteen, and his NEA grant in 1993. And following the Horatio Alger-like example set for him by his grandfather, Worozbyt rose to prominence in each, becoming an executive chef at a five-star restaurant and a buyer and appraiser for a major book publisher.

Worozbyt's desire to remain connected to his working class roots is evident in his poetry, which, in his words, attempts to "stay in touch with the tangible, physical, tasteable, and touchable." Worozbyt quotes the following lines from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*: "I could turn and live with the animals," adding that "poetry should be a very visceral mode of seeing."

## NATASHA TRETHEWEY

I thrill to the magic of it—silver  
crystals like constellations of stars  
arranging on film. In the negative  
the whole world reverses, my black dress turned  
white, my skin blackened to pitch. *Inside out*. . .

from "7. Photography" by Natasha Trethewey

In this excerpt from Trethewey's in-progress second book, the narrator, Ophelia—a mulatto prostitute in New Orleans—encounters an image of herself preserved by turn-of-the-century Creole photographer E.J. Bellocq.

"Being mixed race myself, looking for Ophelia has been a big issue for me. Sometimes writing in her voice can be terrifying. I start sweating, having to admit it's her, not me," Trethewey says.

Trethewey was born in North Gulfport, Mississippi, in 1966, daughter of mother Gwendolyn Turnbough, an English student at then all-black



Natasha Trethewey teaching at LaFayette.

Kentucky State College, and Eric Trethewey, a transplanted Canadian who had enrolled at Kentucky State on a track scholarship. The couple eloped to Ohio to escape Kentucky's strict anti-interracial marriage laws, then moved to Gwendolyn's hometown, where Natasha would have her Aunt Sugar and Grandma Turnbough as touchstones.

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Grandma Turnbough impressed on her granddaughter the importance of education. "She's kind of old-timey. She comes from an era and a class in which education meant everything. It was through [scholastic] degrees, not money, that you gained dignity," Trethewey said.

Similarly, Natasha's father was "demanding. . . in a good way." It was her father's influence that eventually led Trethewey to pursue an M.A. in English and Creative Writing at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, and later an M.F.A. at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

From Aunt Sugar, Trethewey distilled a sense of the importance of things. Trethewey remembers one incident when Sugar knocked on the screen door, and, saying nothing, opened her palm to reveal two unripe figs. "That taught me the power of image," Trethewey says. "She didn't have to say a word. I understood what she was telling me. . . something about waiting for things to be sweet."

## WHAT'S NEXT?


Both Worozbyt and Trethewey are currently at work on second books of poetry. Both continue to teach a variety of literature and creative writing courses at their respective universities.

Worozbyt's scholarly interest in the Romantics resulted in his recent decision to apply for the Ph.D. program at the University of Alabama. If accepted, he will begin doctoral work next fall under the direction of Dr. Richard Rand. In addition, Worozbyt will continue to publish poems with the ultimate goal of landing a tenure-track position in an English

department. Most recently, *Northwest Review* bought 220 lines of his newest work, which he describes as "mammoth, sprawling, gargantuan stuff that is virtually unpublishable."

In addition to her college teaching and ongoing work on *Bellocq's Ophelia*, Trethewey gives poetry workshops at Lafayette High School and at Mount Meigs Detention Center. "I feel a debt of gratitude that can't go unanswered," she said.

"I don't think my efforts take away from my art. I feel like they send me back to my writing filled up again."  
(*Editor's note: While this article was in preparation, Trethewey learned that she has been awarded a Bunting Fellowship at Harvard, to start in the fall of this year.*)

Worozbyt continues to seek fulfillment in teaching, which he calls "deeply gratifying." In the end, both Worozbyt and Trethewey agree that the artist's first responsibility is to make art, a commitment that their talent, coupled with the generosity of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, continues to make possible. 

*Zachary Michael Jack currently teaches creative writing at the University of Alabama and contributes articles to a variety of newspapers and magazines.*

**PAST NAMING**

by Ted Worozbyt

Now what do I call you? Pisser in the Empty Handy Coffee Can,  
Liner Upper of Chisels, Old-Country Fireball Tomato Man?  
I have not talked with you for so long, Grandfather  
Clock with a Picture of a Bluebird in the Glass.

Pirogi Pirate Possum Gitchie Head of the Table Hero  
where now is your refusal  
to talk about wars and silver  
stars? Where is it? the Ukrainian you wouldn't speak, the Polish?

Your mother cooked the schquatki, you climbed the stool to watch  
minced salt-fat render and disappear, the onions  
deepen their color to a black caramel.  
The streets in Warsaw boiled

with the dead, and the hungry enough  
to be dead, and that's the way you stayed,

Slavic Cabbage-Headed God of My Unborn Life,  
and that's the way I came to have you.

O Pardoner of Slugs, Hoarder of Eggshells Crushed,  
Genius Numbskull Pecan-Picking Son of an Ikon,  
Mr. Fingernails Dirty Unto Death  
Where is the green feculent stink of beans?

Benny Benny Benny  
Foiled Fisherman with a Stack  
of Naked Magazines in the Laundryroom,  
Wizard of Hay-Stiff Bitter Strawberries

I am your handful of blisters and lime,  
and I am stepping dully with you into the weedy edges  
where something rotten is more red than I imagine.  
Devourer of Anything Less than Perfectly Unnamable Love,

How can I remember a name, the name your mother gave you?  
(published in *The Kenyon Review*, Spring 1996)

*Excerpts from*  
**BELLOCQ'S OPHELIA**

by Natasha Trethewey

## 3. Bellocq

April 1911

There comes a quiet man now to my room—  
Papá Bellocq, his camera on his back.  
He wants *nothing*, he says, but to take me  
as I would arrange myself, fully clothed—  
a brooch at my throat, my white hat angled  
just so—or *not*, the smooth map of my flesh  
awash in afternoon light. In my room  
everything's a prop for his composition—  
brass spittoon in the corner, the silver  
mirror, brush and comb of my toilette.  
I try to pose as I think he would like—shy  
at first, then bolder. I'm not so foolish  
that I don't know this photograph we make  
will bear the stamp of his name, not mine.

## 4. Blue Book

June 1911

I wear my best gown for the picture—  
white silk with seed pearls and ostrich feathers—

my hair in a loose chignon. Behind me,  
Bellocq's black scrim just covers the laundry—  
tea towels, bleached and frayed, drying on the line.  
I look away from his lens to appear  
demure, to attract those guests not wanting  
the lewd sights of Emma Johnson's circus.  
Countess writes my description for the book—  
*"Violet," a fair-skinned beauty, recites*  
*poetry and soliloquies; nightly*  
*she performs her tableau vivant, becomes*  
*a living statue, an object of art—*  
and I fade again into someone I'm not.

## 7. Photography

October 1911

Bellocq talks to me about light, shows me  
how to use shadow, how to fill the frame  
with objects—their intricate positions.  
I thrill to the magic of it—silver  
crystals like constellations of stars  
arranging on film. In the negative  
the whole world reverses, my black dress turned  
white, my skin blackened to pitch. *Inside out.*  
I said, thinking of what I've tried to hide.  
I follow him now, watch him take pictures.  
I look at what he can see through his lens  
and what he cannot—silverfish behind

the walls, the yellow tint of a faded bruise—  
other things here, what the camera misses.

## 8. Disclosure

January 1912

When Bellocq doesn't like a photograph  
he scratches across the plate. But I know  
other ways to obscure a face—paint it  
with rouge and powder, shades lighter than skin,  
don a black velvet mask. I've learned to keep  
my face behind the camera, my lens aimed  
at a dream of my own making. What power  
I find in transforming what is real—a room  
flushed with light, calculated disarray.  
Today I tried to capture a redbird  
perched on the tall hedge. As my shutter fell,  
he lifted in flight, a vivid blur above  
the clutter just beyond the hedge—garbage,  
rats licking the inside of broken eggs.

**A COUPLET OF FELLOWSHIPS***Continued on page 6*

# Celebrating National Poetry Month

BY STEPHANIE BOND

**“POETRY IS NOT JUST FOR THE FEW, BUT IS A RICH AND VIGOROUS PRESENCE IN AMERICAN LIFE.”**

*Robert Pinsky*

“On the page, on the web, in the media, and in gatherings all across the United States, poetry has become part of the air we breathe,” observed Bill Wadsworth, Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets, in announcing the fifth annual National Poetry Month. “More poetry books are being published. More readings are taking place. More children are discovering poetry in and out of the classroom. National Poetry Month provides an opportunity for Americans of all ages to learn more about the tremendous vitality and variety of our contemporary poetry.”

Across the United States in April, publishers, book-sellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets are coming together to read, perform, discuss, and otherwise bring poetry to life with various activities. With the sponsorship support of more than 90 for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, National Poetry Month strives to meet the following goals:

- ❖ highlight the extraordinary legacy and ongoing achievement of American poets;
- ❖ introduce more Americans to the pleasures of reading poetry;
- ❖ bring poets and poetry to the public in immediate and innovative ways; make poetry a more important part of the school curriculum;
- ❖ increase the attention paid to poetry by national and local media;
- ❖ encourage increased publication, distribution, and sales of poetry books.

Some National Poetry Month special features this year include:

- ❖ Loew's Cineplex Entertainment's sponsoring of a public service announcement slide for National Poetry Month that will be seen on 1,800 movie screens nationwide;



The  
Academy of  
American Poets  
Announces

NATIONAL  
POETRY  
MONTH  
2000

Courtesy of The Academy of American Poets

- ❖ the Library of America celebrating its publication of *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century Volumes I and II* with a series of discussions and readings by distinguished poets throughout the country;
- ❖ hosting “Poetry and the American People,” a two-day festival, April 3-4, in Washington, D.C., of readings and discussions with Millennium Poets Rita Dove, Louise Glück, Robert Haas, Robert Pinsky, and W.S. Merwin that is co-sponsored by the Academy of American Poets, the Library of Congress, the Favorite Poem Project, and the Poetry Society of America.
- ❖ posting poetry banners on Yahoo! that will link to the Academy's website, where readers will find a national calendar of NPM events and information.

The Academy of American Poets acts as a catalyst, a central clearing house for publicity and promotion, and a resource center for National Poetry Month. The Academy's website (<http://www.Poets.org>) is a treasure-trove of information about NPM and ideas for celebrating it. Press kits, the NPM poster, and other material can be obtained by contact-



ing Cathleen Tefft (ctefft@poets.org). A NPM Resource Guide lists major poetry publishers, periodicals, and other organizations; major American poetry awards with recent recipients; and a gallery of NPM posters and other images. The NPM Tipsheets for booksellers, librarians, and teachers include practical (and inexpensive) suggestions for setting up programs, events, classes, and displays for NPM. Examples of successful NPM programs that have been held around the country are also available.

Online discussion groups, moderated by the Academy staff, are part of the National Poetry Month website. These groups were originally created to help celebrate National Poetry Month in 1996, but they are now open all the time. Topics include the following: General Discussion; Favorite Poems or Books; Trying to Find a Poem, Poetry, or Book; Share Your Poems; Suggestions Box; and Practice Forum (for new users).

Perhaps one of the most important ongoing celebrations of poetry is Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's Favorite Poem Project (<http://www.favoritepoem.org>). The project began in April 1998 when Pinsky issued a national invitation for submissions, asking Americans: "What is your favorite poem and why?" Over 18,000 submissions later, Pinsky has now edited with Maggie Dietz, Favorite Poem Project Director, *Americans' Favorite Poems: The Favorite Poems Project Anthology*

(W.W. Norton, November 1999). The anthology showcases 200 poems with letters from 260 contributors and demonstrates that "poetry is not just for the few, but is a rich and vigorous presence in American life."

The Favorite Poem Project is now in its audio-visual phase, which ultimately will "create a turn-of-the-millennium archive that captures American voices, faces, and choices and represents people from every state and with varying regional accents, ages, professions, and kinds of educational backgrounds." Pinsky deeply believes that vocal experience in the art of poetry demonstrates the personal connection to a particular poem. "People get a profound, deep-rooted comfort and excitement from saying a poem aloud," says Pinsky.

The Favorite Poem website has information about holding a Favorite Poem reading with specific suggestions of activities from the very successful readings that Pinsky has hosted around the country. These ideas, coupled with the tipsheets and resources available from the Academy of American Poets, present many varied and interesting possibilities "to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture."



*Stephanie Bond is associate editor of National Forum: the Phi Kappa Phi Journal.*

## A COUPLET OF FELLOWSHIPS

*Continued from page 4*

### VISITORS

by Ted Wozroby

Unlike Goya, who represented children with adult, foretelling proportions, most of us envision superior beings from another world as having bodies much like those of infants: wide liquid eyes staring from a hairless head, a proofing loaf of brain, muscles atrophied by all that thinking about nothing more than one good look at post-war Americans.

Or did they believe we were still at it, receiving without a thought as we know it for linear time our most secret codes and messages, light years out of date, but still transmitting democracy's beacon across the black flag of galactic space, our signal weak but riddled with jazz riffs and torch songs and radio theater, when we sat down at last with the blind to imagine the dramas of our serial lives?

A rancher heard a crash in '47, distinct from the heartbeat of thunder pushing rain from a sky suddenly full of possibilities.

A saucerful of babies from the belly of Cassiopeia must have seemed better to wire in as the current of an era than a black rain of mushrooms whistling like a scat dirge down the belted loins of Orion, so when the sheriff phoned the army, a full-bird colonel released the stories of "a metal-like substance, thin as the foil on a pack of Lucky Strikes, a 16-pound sledgehammer couldn't scratch; an I-beam light as a feather, covered with symbols like ancient hieroglyphics in violet or purple," and, homesick, we bought it at every newsstand,

so they kept coming year after year, as Miller and Goodman atrophied to a few notes

our parents played downstairs to drown out Fats and Joe Turner, as our leader hit the mowed-down pools of green, balls dropping with a cluck, pitted with pure white acne.

But it wasn't long before jazz clubs sprang up overnight and money grinned thick from the fold of almost every wallet, and there was always a hot place to go with your baby in the tube-lit neon downtown Saturday night. Tending the urgent boom of our own, we forgot about Babies From Another World.

So that's where I come in, at the tail end of a slick, confident song, missing the chance I missed by random cosmic accident, to know them as I know the kids I went to school with, which is to say: then, once, and iridescently.

*(published in Poetry, June 1991)  
Poems reprinted by permission of the authors.*





*Alabama poet laureate Helen Norris has said that a poem is like  
 “three interlocking circles: one circle is the physical world. . . ,  
 one circle is the world of the mind.  
 The third circle, you have no idea what it is.”*

# The Mysterious Power of Poetry

Its mystery is elusive, but poetry’s magic works on, careless of categories and definitions. This smattering of beloved poems—the Favorite Poem Project Alabama-style (see page 5)—is a kind of catalogue of charms, in both senses of the word. It is a modest index—and these are highly personal stories of feeling and thought—but it glimpses what brings us to poetry and what about it moves us. Enter now the circles that have enchanted nine Alabama writers, readers, and poets.

**Patricia Foster**, a native of Foley, teaches in the Iowa Writers Workshop. Her memoir, *All the Lost Girls*, will be published this fall by the University of Alabama Press.

“On many a bad night I have read this poem, hugged it to me as if it were my voice, my life. To me, it says everything about the fateful decisions we make if we are to live courageous lives. I’m talking about the decisions that wrench you away from what is familiar, reliable, predictable, and send you fumbling down an unknown path because desire, not reason, has told you to go. Like all good poems, and all difficult choices, the narrator lives a divided life, caught between ‘the voices around you . . . shouting their bad advice,’ and your own ‘new voice. . . that kept you company as you strode deeper and deeper into the world.’ And isn’t that the point? To keep striding deeper and deeper into the world until you find the self you alone can recognize?”

## THE JOURNEY

(from *Dreamwork*)

by *Mary Oliver*

One day you finally knew  
 what you had to do, and began,  
 though the voices around you  
 kept shouting  
 their bad advice—  
 though the whole house  
 began to tremble  
 and you felt the old tug

at your ankles.

“Mend my life!”

each voice cried.

But you didn’t stop.

You knew what you had to do,

though the wind pried

with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations,

though their melancholy

was terrible.

It was already late

enough, and a wild night,

and the road full of fallen branches and stones.

But little by little,

as you left their voices behind,

the stars began to burn

through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice

which you slowly

recognized as your own,

that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper

into the world,

determined to do

the only thing you could do—

determined to save

the only life you could save.

**Charles Ghigna** (Birmingham) is the accomplished author of many children’s books, including *Tickle Day*, *Good Dog/Bad Dog*, and *Good Cat/Bad Cat*. His most recent collections, both for adult readers, are

*Plastic Soup* (Black Belt Press 1999) and *Love Poems* (Crane Hill, 1999).

“My all-time favorite poem is ‘Something Told the Wild Geese’ by Rachel Field. It is one of those rare children’s poems that transcends its genre and becomes a hauntingly memorable poem for all ages, one that can be read again and again throughout one’s lifetime. Field’s lyrical power and delicate style in this simple poem about a flock of geese realizing ‘it was time to go’ at once remind us of our own mortality, of the beauty and mystery of the universe, nature, and ourselves. This poem is as enchanting to me now as it was when I first heard it as a child.”

### SOMETHING TOLD THE WILD GEESE

by Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese  
It was time to go.  
Though the fields lay golden  
Something whispered— “Snow.”  
Leaves were green and stirring,  
Berries, luster-glossed.  
But beneath warm feathers  
Something cautioned— “Frost.”  
All the sagging orchards  
Steamed with amber spice,  
But each wild breast stiffened  
At remembered ice.  
Something told the wild geese  
It was time to fly—  
Summer sun was on their wings,  
Winter in their cry.

Huntsville resident **Bonnie Roberts’** *To Hide in the Light* was published in 1998 by Elk River Press. She is at work on a second collection.

### THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

by William Butler Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the  
honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

“This is the first verse of the poem. I have always loved it because it makes me think how lovely it would be to escape all the complexities, roar, and neuroses of our modern lifestyles. It is quite a romantic idea, and it is getting more and more difficult to find such a place of solitude, simplicity, and freedom—a place just to be, just to live. Yeats speaks to my own romantic ‘deep heart’s core,’ as he gives me that place, through his words and imagination. And I have ‘some peace there.’”

**Mary Carol Moran** is a writer, publisher, and teacher who lives in Lafayette. Her latest work can be found in *Ordinary and Sacred as Blood: Alabama Women Speak*, which she edited and published through her Rivers Edge Publishing Company.

“William Butler Yeats’ poem ‘The Coat’ startled me when I first read it in the spring of 1969, in a modern British literature class at the University of Denver. I remember the professor made us write little note cards on the poems we read, and I stapled them into my book. I didn’t get the poem until she explained the symbolism, that Yeats was angry that his poetic style had been copied widely and disastrously, and that his only defense was to abandon style and ‘walk naked.’ The poem itself degenerates from formal to plain as it unwinds. For thirty years I have taken this little poem as a life model, trying to rid myself of externals so that I too could ‘walk naked.’”

### A COAT

by William Butler Yeats

I made my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world’s eyes  
As though they’d wrought it.  
Song, let them take it,  
For there’s more enterprise  
In walking naked.

**Jeffrey Goodman** teaches at the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile. His latest collection is *A Strung Bow* published in 2000. His work has appeared in *The Southern Review*, *The Chicago Review* and *Greenbourse*.

“My favorite poem (at the moment) is ‘Helen Grows Old’ by Janet Lewis who died this year at the age of 99 and who, for 25 years, was my poetic mentor. The poem has the fine virtues characteristic of all of Janet’s work, whether fiction or verse: classical grace, tragic beauty, personal dignity, and a sense of the mystery of things so profound that it can, often, only be understated.

‘No one knows. . . No one brings  
A tale of quiet love. The fading sound  
Is blent of falling embers, weeping kings.’

“The gentle strength in this poem’s voice may give the reader a sense of the author herself. She was the kindest, most intelligent, and most gifted writer I have ever met. I believe that a fair part of her corpus is, at the present time, still in print. The poems are gorgeous, but so are the historical novels.”

**HELEN GROWN OLD***by Janet Lewis*

We have forgotten Paris, and his fate.  
 We have not much inquired  
 If Menelaus from the Trojan gate  
 Returning found the long desired  
 Immortal beauty by his hearth. Then late,  
  
 Late, long past the morning hour,  
 Could even she recapture from the dawn  
 The young delightful love? When the dread power  
 That forced her will was gone,  
 When fell the last charred tower,  
  
 When the last flame had faded from the cloud,  
 And by the darkening sea  
 The plain lay empty of the arméd crown,  
 Then was she free  
 Who had been ruled by passion blind and proud?  
  
 Then did she find with him whom she first chose  
 Before the deperate flight,  
 At last, repose  
 In love still radiant at the edge of night,  
 As fair as in the morning? No one knows.  
  
 No one has cared to say. The story clings  
 To the tempestuous years, by passion bound,  
 Like Helen. No one brings  
 A tale of quiet love. The fading sound  
 Is blent of falling embers, weeping kings.

**Charlotte Cabaniss**, director of the Bay Minette Public Library, believes in the power of poetry. “Yes, I read poetry because the compression and beauty of the figurative speech packs such a punch. My favorite is Wordsworth’s ‘The World Is Too Much With Us’ with focus upon the lines, ‘Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: Little we see in Nature that is ours. . .’ This poem could be a sad commentary on today’s materialistic society in which latch-key children go home to houses mortgaged to two-income families. In seeking the all-mighty dollar, folks begin to live to work rather than work to live. Time passes from paycheck to paycheck and many of the workforce allow the *busi*-ness of life to consume them. No one on their deathbed ever wished they had worked more.”

**THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US***by William Wordsworth*

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers  
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,  
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
 It moves us not.—Great God! I’d rather be  
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

**Elaine Hughes**, professor of English at the University of Montevallo, writes of the consolation the poetry of one particular woman brings to her. “When I am suffering loss, needing solace, or experiencing intense moments of joy, I find myself thinking of lines from Emily Dickinson’s poems—those that offer me comfort and lift my spirits, those that creep unannounced upon my consciousness. Pain, whether from grief, or hurt, or confusion, often elicits the soothing lines,  
 Because I could not stop for Death—  
 He kindly stopped for me—  
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves—  
 And Immortality.

“Other lines I often find myself quoting silently, perhaps to assuage my guilt (of many sorts), are her observations that  
 Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—  
 I keep it, staying at Home—  
 With a Bobolink for a Chorister—  
 And an Orchard, for a Dome—  
 “Though it is difficult to choose a favorite from Dickinson’s many fine poems, I suppose the most meaningful for my life and for my passion is her tribute to literature and what it does for each of us:  
 There is no Frigate like a Book  
 To take us Lands away  
 Nor any Coursers like a Page  
 Of prancing Poetry—

“Lines such as those are the poetry that lets our minds soar and our hearts beat.”

**William Cobb**, whose latest collection of short stories, *Somewhere in All This Green*, has just been chosen as a best book of the year by the Alabama Library Association, is a novelist and playwright, and is retired from teaching at The University of Montevallo. “If I had to narrow my choice of a favorite poem to just one, I guess I’d take ‘Spring and Fall: To a Young Child,’ by Gerard Manley Hopkins. The poem has always seemed to me to sum up everything that is important about being human, in a few carefully chosen and original words and images. I think of it when an elderly family member dies. It comforted me when my sister died at 52, much too early. And I think of the poem when I observe my young grandchildren in an unguarded moment, their entire lives before them. It touches my heart, the way great art should, and I am grateful for it.”

*Continued on page 24*

*The seemingly incoherent or adventurous language of innovative poetry may in fact be closer to talking in tongues or to mystic script than it is to more polished, refined versions of academically sanctioned poetry.*

# NEW POETRY

## An Innovative “Other South”

BY HANK LAZER

For the past sixteen years, Alabama has played a vital role in what has become known as *An Other South*—innovative poetry that takes part in national and international exchanges, while still retaining an ongoing relationship to the local and the regional.

It all began in 1984 with a symposium of poets and critics named “What Is a Poet?” that took place in Tuscaloosa. Charles Bernstein, at that time a thirty-three-year-old New Yorker whose poetry was just beginning to gain national recognition, participated and sparked some heated discussions about the changing nature of American poetry.

More recently, Bill Lavender guest-edited a special issue of *New Orleans Review* on the theme “The Other South.” This landmark issue, published in 1995, began the process of gathering together the considerable variety of experimental writing in the South. As one writer asked in that issue, “Who would confine our literature to kudzu, azaleas, dusty roads, humid afternoons, the air pungent with the scent of magnolia, an instance or two of gratuitous violence, the inspiring heroism and endurance of the downtrodden, the peculiar epiphanies and primitive blunders of a fundamentalist religious practice, and an omnipresent slow-moving muddy river?” In other words, how might contemporary Southern poets write in a fresh manner about the current South, in forms that departed from the well-established clichés of southern fiction? What might a new Southern poetry be?

What has resulted is a rich new form that is often collaborative in nature—with other art forms and among groups

of artists—and is often indebted to principles of collage and to the variously inventive work of regional folk artists. This new southern poetry is characterized by its adventurousness and its incorporation of wide-ranging, unlikely materials, and has been warmly received and richly interpreted throughout the state.

In Florence, there is the exemplary work of poet-artist-musician Jake Berry, who often works with creative partners like Wayne Sides

(artist-photographer-musician) and Richard Curtis (poet and performance artist). In Birmingham, the early 1990s saw a range of cooperative artistic activity centering around the work of Karen Graffeo and Richard Giles, including a major installation, “GardenWorks,” at the Birmingham Arts Alliance. This creative effort deliberately defied definition; the work of seven artists, it included audiotape loops, found materials, photographs, paintings, poetry, and videotapes, as well as an opening night performance of poetry, dance, and music.

In Tuscaloosa, a steady stream of visiting poets over the past fifteen years have assisted in developing the local conversation. In addition to Charles Bernstein (who returned in 1998), visiting poets have included performance artist David Antin, poets Harryette Mullen and Nathaniel Mackey, poet-anthologist-translator Jerome Rothenberg, book-artist-poet Charles Alexander, poet Jack Foley, poet Lyn Hejinian (who also spent a semester in residence), and poet Bob Perelman.

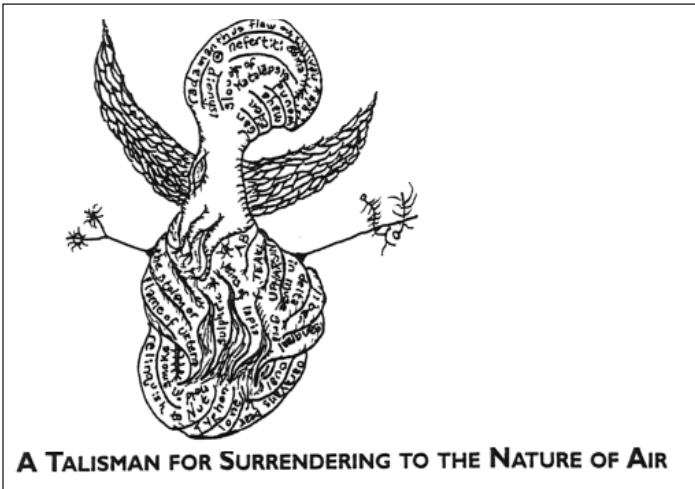
Hank Lazer



Hank Lazer has collaborated with dancers, working with Cornelius Carter and the Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre on a piece called “Cantus in Memory” (performed in 1995). “I have come to understand poetry as a kind of choreography of words on the page,” he says.

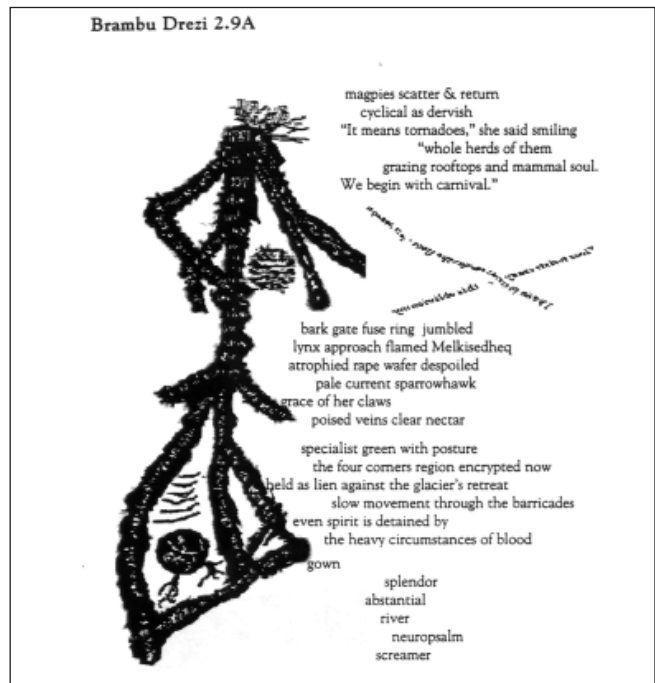
There have been a variety of noteworthy performances in Tuscaloosa, including an opera (Dana Wilson’s “For Stavros” in 1991, which included some poetry by this writer), a women’s festival of the arts (in 1987, where





The seemingly incoherent or adventurous language of innovative poetry may in fact be closer to talking in tongues or to mystic script than it is to more polished, refined versions of academically sanctioned poetry.

Lyn Hejinian appeared, as did composer Libbie Larsen), a multimedia performance of Jake Berry's "Brambu Drezi" and a 1999 conference on innovative writing which included members of the APG (Atlanta Poetry Group), Marvin Sackner (a Miami physician who is the leading collector in the world of visual poetry), fiction writer Michael Martone, and San Francisco Bay Area poet Jack Foley.



In Jake Berry's poetry, particularly in his ongoing epic poem "Brambu Drezi," one will find illustrations that resemble the work of Paul Klee combined with scientific drawings. His work has embraced material from his own upbringing in the Church of Christ, along with gnostic and kabbalistic religious sources, and material from the practice of Haitian voodoo.



In Hank Lazer's second book, *INTER(IR)RUPTIONS*, the poems include materials from baseball batting averages to fashion magazine columns, from neurophysiology research to the names of Tuscaloosa children in a Valentine's day issue of the local newspaper.

At present, a Salon meets regularly at the home of Sylvia Elliott and Cornelius Carter in Tuscaloosa to discuss ongoing artistic projects. The group includes video artist Nik Vollmer (who is filming the RV culture of Alabama football weekends); Tony Bolden, whose work blurs the boundaries between poem, blues, personal essay, and performance; choreographer Cornelius Carter; and a number of other writers and artists.

The work of Other South writers challenges received or nostalgic version of the South in ways that are provocative and, at times, disturbing. With its reliance on electronic distribution—such as Jake Berry's e-journal *The Experiendicist*—and on small presses, the Other South poetry, in addition to kinship with the work of self-taught regional folk artists, also bears some resemblance to the garage band phenomenon in rock 'n' roll.

Many of Alabama's finest Other South poets have a considerable national and international visibility, though recognition locally and

regionally has been much slower to arrive. Wayne Sides' photographs are shown in New York City. Jake Berry has read at leading centers for poetry in the San Francisco Bay Area, and he has played guitar with Bob Dylan. Jake Berry and this writer are featured in the current issue (#4) of *Mythosphere: A Journal for Image, Myth, and Symbol* with a selection of poems and essays on myth-making and poetry.

One common misunderstanding of experimental or innovative poetry is that it is somehow a kind of hyper-academic, inaccessible art form. In fact, the opposite is true. It often comes from quite accessible and immediate sources—in music, in the arts, in daily experience, in common speech, and in our contemporary experience of attending to many events and vocabularies simultaneously. In general, innovative poets are quite conversant with the work of local folk artists such as Mose Tolliver, Fred Webster, Jimmie Lee Sudduth, Howard Finster, and Reverend Perkins. Like much southern folk art, poetry of the Other South may place a great emphasis on intensity of vision and on immediacy of invention. Rather than repeating and refining a school-taught technique, the Other South poet is eager to develop new modes of expression that reflect the complex intersections of consciousness as it occurs to us here and now.

In 1999, *New Orleans Review* ventured forth with a second installation of new southern writing, this time slightly revising the label for the writing, calling it "An Other South." The original group of 19 poets and 78 pages of material had grown to 44 poets and 150 pages of material, and a conference was held with readings and discussions in November 1999.

*Continued on page 27*

# Poetry Inspires Incarcerated Young Writers

BY RUTH BEAUMONT COOK

Danny Gamble wasn't sure what to expect when one of his creative writing students called to him as class ended. "Hey, Gamble, I need to talk to you outside."

"I wondered what I might have said or done to upset him," says Gamble. "But out there in the hall, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a piece of paper and read me a poem. Each time he reads to me, the work is better than the last."

As the Alabama Writers' Forum and the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS) expand "Writing Our Stories: An Anti-Violence Creative Writing Program" to additional campuses, Danny Gamble becomes the third teaching writer placed in a DYS school since 1997. Marlin Barton continues to work with boys at Mount Meigs, and Priscilla Hancock Cooper teaches a girls' class at Chalkville.



Writers and teachers at McNeel School: teaching writer Danny Gamble, classroom teacher Cynthia Wilburn, visiting writer Frank X. Walker, and Chalkville teaching writer Priscilla Hancock Cooper.

Gamble is a graduate of the University of Montevallo with an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Alabama. In November, he introduced the violence prevention/creative writing program to the McNeel School at Vacca, an all-boys' facility located in Roebuck near Birmingham. Each Tuesday and Thursday, he meets with a group of twelve to fifteen prospective writers in the school library. He encourages them to keep journals, write image-based poems, and express their feelings. Gamble, who also teaches English at UAB, works with the boys individually and in small groups as they revise and edit their work. He will serve as visiting writer at McNeel for the entire residency, which is through July, and then will edit the upcoming anthology of student writing from Vacca.

Gamble says that at McNeel, he deals with relatively typical young adolescents. "By and large, the students exhibit a great eagerness to write." About the program's effectiveness, Gamble observes, "I believe the students' learning their self-worth, discovering their intuition, and exploring their innate talent represent the most important outcome of this project."

Three students were asked if their work could be shared as examples at



Danny Gamble listens to one of his McNeel School writers read a freshly written poem.

the in-service workshop for McNeel teachers and staff. "Each student beamed with surprise and pride when I asked his permission to share his work," confided Gamble.

Cynthia Wilburn, cooperating faculty member, teaches English and acts as liaison for "Writing Our Stories" at Vacca. She says Gamble is good at drawing students out. "We had one boy who was very withdrawn, very aloof from the group, but now he has totally come out of himself and is really writing."

Wilburn believes the program has had a distinct influence on her students. "They recognize concepts in literature and can relate to them in class. Some have already filled several journals, and I can see that that gets the juices going for when they come to the writing class."

Principal Billy W. Davenport welcomes the creative writing program at Vacca. "This is innovative. It interests the students," he says. "Our boys, on the whole, considering test scores, read on a fourth grade level, and I think this will really help those who have a potential for writing."

The introductory faculty orientation presented by Alabama Writers' Forum director Jeanie Thompson, accompanied by teachers Bart Barton and Danny Gamble, also garnered praise from Davenport. "They gave us an overview and even involved our teachers in an interactive writing exercise. It was one of the best in-service workshops we've had. This is a great program for our kids and also for the department," says Davenport.

On Thursday, March 2, Frank X. Walker, a poet from Louisville, Kentucky, visited the class. "I write about real things," he told the incarcerated young writers. To prove it, he read a poem about basketball from his recently published collection, *Affrilachia: Poems by Frank X. Walker*. Later in the class, Walker read another poem called "Cold Still," in which he spoke of squeezing the hands of prisoners as he tried to instill warmth in a prison setting. Meaningful phrases like "hugless diets" and "21st century Amistad" (to evoke the feeling of the federal prison) immediately caught the attention of his audience.

"Anyone in here who doesn't like poetry?" asked Walker. No hands

went up. "Someone's lyin'," he said with a grin, and several hands went up in front of sheepish smiles.

Walker asked the boys to write mystery poems about concrete objects in the room around them. He invited them to write their poems on a chalkboard at the front of the class so others could guess their meaning. "An electronic director showing us the way" was how one boy characterized the green electric exit sign over the library doorway. "Don't turn me on, then turn me down," wrote another, describing the silent black television set on a cart in one corner. "Bottler of space, capturer of time, taken then given to the world," wrote a third student to describe the complicated camera used by the photographer for this story. The poet praised the boys' work and said he liked their imagery.

Then he drew a thin white line down the middle of the chalkboard. He asked what it was and got a wide range of answers: a snake, a skinny tree, a piece of string, a line of cocaine. "Everyone sees



Frank X. Walker reading from *Affrilachia: Poems* during his visit to McNeel School.

things differently," explained Walker. "I want you to be able to see another point of view, and I want you to see that, if you use succinct language, you can get everyone else to see your point of view."

When Walker left the Vacca campus, he was scheduled to conduct another workshop for the girls at Chalkville that afternoon and a third one for the boys' class at Mount Meigs the following morning. He is just one of many visiting writers who contribute programs to "Writing Our Stories" each year.

"Writing our Stories" is an on-going collaborative project of the Alabama Writers' Forum and the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS). It currently takes place on three DYS campuses in the state. For further information, people may contact the Alabama Writers' Forum at 334/242-4076, ext. 233 or email to: awf1@arts.state.al.us

*Ruth Beaumont Cook is a writer and AWF board member who lives in Birmingham.*

*The following poems are from the "Writing Our Stories" program at the McNeel School on the Vacca Campus of the Department of Youth Services.*

### MEMORIES OF THE POLICE

Every time I see a police car, I remember blue lights flashing.  
Fear rushes through my mind as my life blood flows fast as lightning.  
I remember the taste of powder and the smell of the engine burning.

I still hear the bang of the crash every time  
I see a police car and my stomach starts churning.

S.A.

### HIS GUITAR

My uncle died at the young age of eighteen; I was only two.  
He left his guitar to my dad, who gave it to me.

It feels so comfortable in my hands,  
As if I were made for fitting it.

Its electric sound is the heart that pumps my blood.

Through it all my dreams are manifested.  
When I play, I feel his presence inside of me.

D.M.



### SOMETIMES TO MY "SHORTY"

I don't know how I feel.

Sometimes I feel like I have the wings  
of an eagle that soars above all expectation.

Sometimes I feel like I'm alone in the dark,  
struggling to find my way to the light. Sometimes

I feel like a caged bird that sits and wonders how  
freedom really feels. Sometimes I think about you

and how you brought me joy like a mother holding her  
new born child. Sometimes I wonder why you'd hurt me so  
bad like an innocent child shot down by a drive by shooting.

Sometimes I feel like the world is on my shoulders because  
I don't have you in my life. I can't stop thinking about the

things we used to do. Sometimes I feel like a rose, stuck by  
my own thorns. Sometimes I feel like life is so unfair like

a homeless man lying on the street corner. Sometimes I feel  
like I don't know what I feel, but the only thing I need now

is your love and to never let you go.

R.Y.

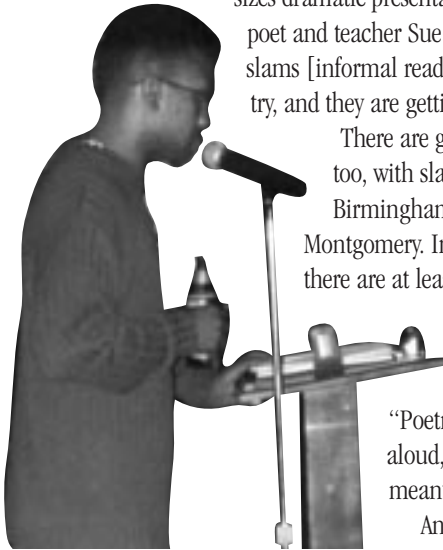


# Poetry Slams

BY ROBYN BRADLEY LITCHFIELD

Writers, students, waiters, bartenders, and bankers. They may be from all walks of life, but they have at least one common interest—sharing their poetry with others. “The general public doesn’t realize how extremely popular poetry is—especially performance poetry, which really emphasizes dramatic presentation,” says Prattville poet and teacher Sue Scalf. “There are poetry slams [informal readings] all over the country, and they are getting more popular.”

Photo courtesy Vibes and Verses Poetry Society



*Derick Marshall is a co-founder of Vibes and Verses Poetry Society. He can be reached at [leboyce@bellsouth.net](mailto:leboyce@bellsouth.net).*

There are groups across the state, too, with slams in such places as Birmingham, Montevallo, and Montgomery. In the Capital City alone, there are at least three regular gatherings giving participants chances to read their work for fellow poets.

“Poetry is meant to be read aloud,” Scalf says. “You’re meant to hear the sounds.”

And you’re likely to hear just about anything at a gathering of one of Montgomery’s strongest groups, Vibes & Verses Poetry Society, which

will celebrate its second anniversary in July. The slams are particularly rewarding when a “wet person,” a newcomer, takes the stage and wows the crowd with his or her words, says Derick Marshall, who co-founded the group with Judith Atchison.

Sometimes the Vibes & Verses crowd includes E-K Daufin, a regular at Spoken Word, a slam that started a couple of years ago at Montgomery’s 1048 Jazz and Blues Club. The number of readers at 1048 ranges from two to ten, and each session is different, she says.

One of the things that attracts Daufin, an associate professor at Alabama State University in Montgomery, is the chance to entertain.

“I love it when I can make them laugh as well as cry,” says Daufin, who tickled the crowd her first time on stage at Vibes & Verses.

In between poems, Marshall encourages audience members to feel free to share what’s on their minds, in their hearts. Space in the spotlight comes without restrictions, she says. “I don’t like to limit my work,” says Marshall, a teacher at an at-risk school in Montgomery. “I try to wait on inspiration. You can’t force art.”

Father’s Day weekend, Marshall and others will share their art with the crowds at Birmingham’s City Stages, which includes the Spoken Word Festival. Michael Gaines of Birmingham also will be among the perform-

ers. Gaines leads a slam each second Sunday at Birmingham’s 22nd Street Jazz Cafe. Another popular slam is the Birmingham Poetry Slam, which meets at Doodles Cafe on 21st Street South, the second Friday of

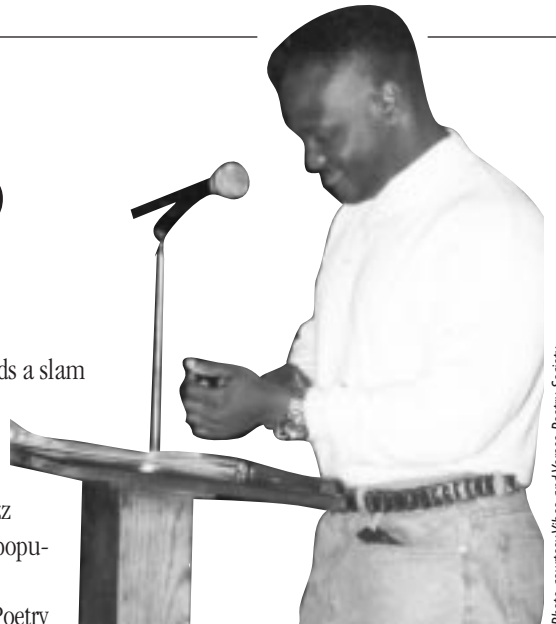


Photo courtesy Vibes and Verses Poetry Society

*In Jake Berry’s poetry, particularly in his ongoing epic poem “Brambu Fred “Freaky Tales” Williams takes the podium at a regular slam called Spoken Word.*

## IS IT ART, ENTERTAINMENT, OR GROUP THERAPY?

the month. This group also will participate in this year’s City Stages. Throughout the year, co-emcees Lindsay Stone and Kirk Hardesty welcome 70 to 80 people to each slam, which features between 15 and 20 poets.

“We have a community, especially in Birmingham, where poets are supported and encouraged to express themselves . . . I am inspired to write more myself, and I have an open forum for displaying my art,” says Hardesty, who owns a small publishing company in Birmingham with his wife, Jerri. Hardesty also participates in a Montevallo slam that was started about two years ago at Barnstormer Pizza. Between 40 and 60 people attend, and eight to 12 poets read for the group. In between his day job and the two slams, Hardesty and his fellow poet Stone are working on a web site for slams. It is a lot of work, but it is worth it to Hardesty.

“The slam is a meeting of cultures, very much a melting pot where people of all kinds come together and relate to each other,” Hardesty says. “And I have a lot of fun.”

*Robyn Bradley Litchfield is a features writer for the Montgomery Advertiser.*

### MORE INFORMATION

Several attempts were made to contact poetry groups in other Alabama cities.

Do you know of other Alabama poetry slams? Let *First Draft* know.

Here is how to contact organizers about the slams mentioned:

**Vibes & Verses Poetry Society**, Rose Supper Club,

Montgomery, (334) 263-4275. [www.vibesandverses.com](http://www.vibesandverses.com)

**Spoken Word**, 1048 Jazz and Blues Club, Montgomery, (334) 834-1048

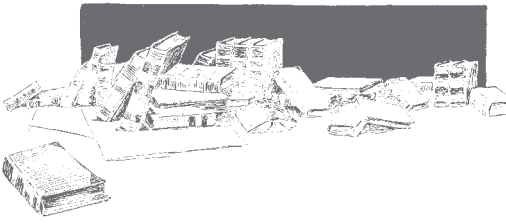
**22nd Street Jazz Cafe group**, Birmingham, (205) 979-4995

**Birmingham Poetry Slam**, Birmingham, and

**Montevallo Poetry Slam**, (205) 665-7904.

(You can e-mail Hardesty at [niteglider@aol.com](mailto:niteglider@aol.com) or [www.poetryslam.net](http://www.poetryslam.net))





# R E V I E W S

JAY LAMAR, *Editor*

## ***Enemies of the State***

by Thomas Rabbitt

Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 2000  
96 pp. Hardcover, \$15.95

In this, Thomas Rabbitt's seventh collection of poetry, he returns to his preoccupations with sex, death, and religion. Anger at the myriad wrongs done to anyone who's different, any "enemy of the state," burns powerfully throughout this book, whose poems deal with such disparate subject matter as gay-bashing, anti-Semitism, family politics, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and cruelty to animals.

The book moves around in time and space, with poems set in Tuscaloosa and Cape Cod, the nineteen forties and fifties and the present. The references are both private and public, and the more familiar allusions—to J. Edgar Hoover, World War II, old pop songs, and poets Marianne Moore, John Berryman, and Robert Lowell—help fill in the blanks when the private allusions are themselves a bit too elusive.

In its general clarity, *Enemies* may indicate some shift in Rabbitt's poetic practice. For a reader who has followed his work up to this point, *Enemies of the State* appears to be more explicitly autobiographical than earlier books. In most of the poems in this book, language and craft are used less as a series of defensive maneuvers and more as a way of letting the reader into the poem. While his sharp wit is not abandoned, in these poems Rabbitt's persona is more reflective and open. Up to now, one might admire his poems for their craft and intelligence but not always understand them. Here, the poems are still well-crafted but are becoming more accessible as well.

One of the strongest poems in the book, "The Black Wine of Li Po" has these lines about love, writing, and the inability to reach any final answers:

One morning, when the air outside my window  
Crackles with birdsong and the smell of pine,  
I will set down my brush and let it blot.  
I will take up the pot of ink and drink  
Pine soot, carp skin, the dark draught of romance  
Which, no matter its complex depths, will not  
Deliver the cure against what I think.

Writing, even going so far as to become one with the process by drinking the ink, is no cure, but it is one of the best ways we have to approach life's complexity and chronic absurdity.

*Enemies of the State*



Poems By Thomas Rabbitt

If you were to read only one poem in this book, "Bernadette Murphy, 1943-1955" would be hard to beat. The poem begins "Fat girls have more fun in the woods/Is what boys said. What did I know?" and continues to its chilling conclusion. The final four poems of the book, "On the Old Pop Charts," "The Beach at Falmouth Heights," "In Memory," and "The Power of Faith," provide a good sample of Rabbitt's range in expressing ironic humor, elegiac sadness, and contemplative consciousness pushed to its limits.

*Jennifer Horne is a poet and essayist and the managing editor at the University of Alabama Press. Her essay on Thomas Rabbitt's work appeared in the Spring 1999 issue of the Black Warrior Review.*

## ***The Next Valley Over: An Angler's Progress***

by Charles Gaines

Crown Publishers, 2000

237 pp. Hardcover, \$23

When I read Charles Gaines, I know that I will be taken into an interesting new world where I always wanted to go but have never been. He is wonderfully adventurous in his nonfiction as he is in his novels. *Pumping Iron* explored the world of body-builders. *A Family Place* painted the rural life he and Patricia and their children found on Nova Scotia.

Gaines never fails me, and once again in *The Next Valley Over* he carries me into another world; this time, it's one of fishing, where the lifestyle fits the author like an old glove or a hand-tied fly. Oh, I know fishing. I have enjoyed some hours on the water. But I have never known it the way Charles Gaines knows it. For him, as it is with fellow Birmingham native Howell Raines in his *Fly-Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis*, fishing is a bone-deep heart-felt way of life. It is not about the fish but the glory, the hurt, the resonance of friendship, the beauty.

Whether on a lake in north Alabama going for bass and bluegill or in the Bahamas hooking bluefish or in the wilds of Montana wading into chest-deep waters for trout, Gaines writes like an inspired angel. With a poet's turn-of-phrase, he offers up a feast of succulent oysters in the Atchafalaya, an icy taste of Chardonnay with tuna steaks in Key West, and red-whiskey drinking and arm-wrestling with James Dickey in Wisconsin.

More than any other paragraph in *The Next Valley Over*, I love the way he writes:

Periodically throughout my life, maybe once or twice a decade, I meet a woman who instantly makes me want to shout the same thing; I see in a female face a particular shining mingling of beauty,

wit, and unabashed appetites, and I just want to pop a straw in that person and drink her. This cannot properly be called a crush.

I am a very happily married man, and I get pretty much the same feeling every time I look at my daughter, Greta, and at my seventy-two-year-old quail-hunting friend Peggy Pepper. I just happen to have a strong affinity for lovely, unafraid women with a sweet tooth for life.

With these words, I feel a stronger kinship to Gaines. I have met his wife, Patricia, and I have met his daughter, Greta, and I have known other women, fishing in life's waters, who have made me want to shout, theirs is such an extraordinary loveliness. He has written the words; the sentiment, that is a refrain for living life meaningfully.

Like James Dickey told him, and I repeat with gusto, "You're one of mine, god dammit! Boy, you're one of my own."

Hallelujah!

*Wayne Greenhaw's latest book, Beyond the Night: A Remembrance, is currently in its second printing with Black Belt Press.*

### **Dogfight and Other Stories**

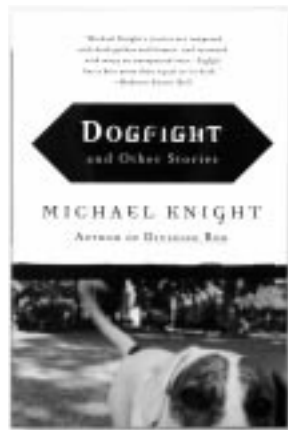
by Michael Knight

Plume, 1998

176 pp. Paper, \$11.95

In his first collection of stories, Michael Knight gives us a perceptive and sympathetic view of the troubles of middle-class people under forty. His stories have urban settings, largely in south Alabama. He explores relationships with considerable insight, and there are many good moments when his knowledge of the craft shows forth.

The insubstantiality of one's self-image is a recurring theme in these stories. Knight's characters are usually fragile, needing someone real or imaginary to sustain an identity. In "A Bad Man, So Pretty," Win needs Mohammed Ali and his brother needs Win, for "at least the house was alive with Win in it." In "Gerald's Monkey," the rich kid with a summer job in his uncle's shipyard needs the mean black welder Wishbone to send him for cigarettes. The little girl in "Amelia Earhart's Coat" has to believe Amelia and her father are lovers. The divorced man in "Poker" has his buddies to help (and, yes, a dog) but he also dreams he's sneaking kisses with Drew Barrymore. The narrator in "Dogfight" still wants to be mothered by his ex-wife. In "Sundays," a sexually insecure Latin and Greek teacher embraces the sleeping daughter of a woman/friend he sees with another man—in secret, "there with the moonlight between them." He also has a more traditional way of sustaining himself, Solon's disquisition on happiness, and this he would tell the little girl, if he could. "Every day brings the possibility of change. You can't judge a man's happiness until he is dead." But the point



here is he cannot fall back on disseminating knowledge, even though he is a teacher. Nor is Solon available for sleeping little girls.

In "Now You See Her," we have a peeping Tom veterinarian father and his peeping Tom son, who calls himself X. The lady under scrutiny's dog gets sick, so naturally she telephones her neighbor, the vet. The vet takes his son with him to the clinic, where he meets the girl he has ogled, and, happy ending here, successfully treats the dog. Although the vet is only in his thirties, it turns out that the lady hits it off with X.

I remember X and how at ease he was with those girls at the mall. I run my fingers through my hair, smile the smile, and cock my hip like some kid. It doesn't feel right, feels foolish.

A vet cocking his hip in his own clinic does follow from the story's premise, for who knows how a man without a woman might behave? It's the premise, here, that seems simplistic until one remembers Knight's identity theme. The man has no idea who he really is, so he has to make up or borrow an identity. Unlike most voyeurs, he would rather watch his inamorata dress than undress.

She makes her body a secret again, dressing slowly, as if she regretted having to do it at all. A reverse striptease, I imagine balloons inflating around her as she pulls pins out of them.

The vet is sustained through a richer, and funnier, metaphor than the son's Kafkaesque X. Here surface and symbol coalesce.

*Charles Rose is retired professor of English at Auburn University. He is a frequent reviewer for Southern Humanities Review, Georgia Review, and other journals.*

**The 521 All-Stars:  
A Championship Story of Baseball and Community**  
Photos by Byron Baldwin  
Text by Frye Gaillard  
Black Belt Press, 1999  
128 pp. Hardback, \$29.95

Before television, before even radio, when exposure to big-time sports was almost exclusively an urban privilege, the baseball familiar to most Americans took the form of teams organized to represent small towns and the businesses and industries that made their profits there. (The most common early 19th-century incarnation of the game was called "town ball.")

It was a pastime and a passion that knit communities together—and sometimes drove them bitterly apart—in ways that have all but vanished in an era when baseball, even among its most passionate apostles, is almost exclusively a passive experience. Its active participants are even more remote—in distance, ability, and especially income—from most of us than Babe Ruth in the 1920s would have been from the local right fielder in Yakima or Cedar Rapids, who at least played the game. The friends, family, and co-workers who came to cheer him to victory against the nine from

a neighboring town or rival factory gave baseball a unique intimacy, a special connectedness with its place and time.

*The 521 All-Stars*, appropriately subtitled “A

Championship Story of Baseball and Community,” is photographer Byron Baldwin’s and writer Frye Gaillard’s affectionate, almost reverent tribute to a kind of baseball that seems smuggled out of an earlier age, and which survives on crude Southern fields where men, most of them black, most too old to have delusions of big-league grandeur, and all too young to quit playing the game they love, gather every weekend to do battle before local fans who pay \$2 a head.

The team’s name and the book’s title derive from the U.S. highway through Rembert, South Carolina, where photographer and former ballplayer Baldwin was driving in 1996 when he spotted a homemade baseball park with “521 All-Stars” spray-painted on the side. He stopped to take pictures, returned to the team frequently over the next two years, and asked friend Gaillard to help him chronicle the 1998 season, when the All-Stars battled for the Gamecock League championship.

This vivid and evocative photo essay brings to life a world of chain link and chicken wire where men mostly in their mid- to late ’30s, with a sprinkling of kids still young enough for big-time dreams and forty-something graybeards old enough (a few of them even good enough) to have big-time memories, do for fans in ramshackle homemade grandstands what baseball used to do for Americans of farmland and frontier—give small, isolated communities a kind of identity.

In *Shoeless Joe*, novelist W.P. Kinsella created a lush Iowa cornfield where baseball’s gods gathered to sustain the game’s mythic past. Baldwin and Gaillard have given us instead the hardscrabble fields of rural South Carolina, where flesh-and-blood men sustain its real past. In the process, they make the implicit case that baseball is closer to us, to what we were and are and ought to be, than the 50,000-seat cathedrals where millionaires perform for the TV cameras.

Abner Doubleday didn’t really invent baseball in Cooperstown, New York, in 1839, and Babe Ruth didn’t really stand at the plate in Chicago and point majestically to the center field stands before smashing his fabled homer off Charlie Root in the 1932 World Series. But there really is a Rembert, South Carolina, where a deputy sheriff and a forklift operator and a painter and a truck driver and other working men take the field on summer weekends, as Rembert men have done every summer since the 1920s, to uphold civic pride against challengers from Gable and Shiloh and Chicken Shack.



On any bookshelf set aside for the great stories and figures of baseball, the likes of Tommy-Dog English and Worm Robinson and Raymond “Sugar Bear” Washington would not be out of their league.

*Dusty Nix* is an associate editor, editorial writer, and columnist for the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer.

## **Down from the Dog Star**

by Daniel Glover

Black Belt Press, 1999

271 pp. Hardcover, \$26.95

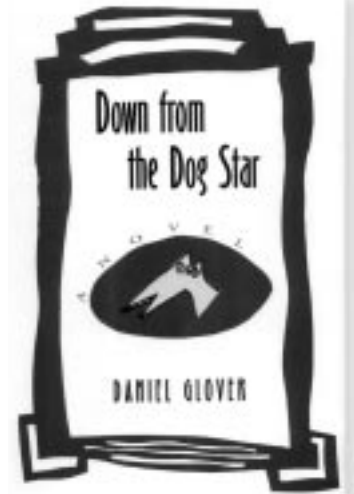
Imagine Laurence Sterne, author of the maniacally eccentric classic *Tristram Shandy*, living as a contemporary gay man in a small town in north-central Alabama, steeped in Southern literature, and writing about such things as extra-terrestrials, South American cannibals, euthanasia, fringe fundamentalism, canine

intelligence, and the decline of the aristocracy. Say he was a veteran of Narcotics Anonymous, upon which he held no scarcity of opinions. Say that one of his favorite correspondents was Dr. Jack Kavorkian. Say he put all of this into that quintessential eighteenth-century literary form, the epistolary novel, and it became his very first book ever. Say that Montgomery’s Black Belt Press, in a burst of inspiration, had published this novel. Then you might have an inkling of the nature and originality of Daniel Glover’s *Down from the Dog Star*.

Glover, who lives part of the year on his farm near Birmingham and part of the year in Phoenix, Arizona, is a natural-born talker. He can spin tales out of dust motes. He has a faultless ear for the way people speak, and he knows what makes a goodly number of them tick. In Jackson K. (Jackie) Luden, the intrepid letter-writing hero of his novel, he has an alter ego as silver-tongued as Oscar Wilde and as catty as Joan Rivers. He tells one correspondent, “You know that the only way to stop a gay vampire is for a woman to expose either her breasts or a Wal-Mart label.” He writes his best friend, Junior Wulmothe (who’s getting some R&R in a sanitarium in Tuscaloosa), “[Y]our sister was wrapped around the Judge like butter on corn.”

Jackie has the low-down on everybody in his little town of Ludens Bend, though he insists that he doesn’t gossip or ever “say anything tacky.” His letters, pecked out on a rescued word processor, are often stream-of-consciousness (“I’ve been looking for platform shoes. They’re rare.”) and full of such enticing preambles as, “I promised that I’d tell you the true, unedited story of that psychic and the WD-40.”

Tacky or not, he always delivers on a promise. He’s especially diligent in keeping his pen pals informed on the doings of the ladies





of the Third Church of God Delivered, who operate one of Ludens Bend's most thriving businesses, the Eternal Life Café and Souvenir Shop for Jesus. He gives the notorious history of Sister Vernetta, the duplicitous Keeper of the Snakes, of Sister Tara Wilcox (that interloper from Dothan), and of the church's head of missions, Sister Ling-Ling Tarwater ("her mother was absolutely obsessed with The King and I"). Ultimately Sister Ling-Ling and other Third Church contacts help get Jackie posted to a missionary outpost in the Amazon jungle, where he can lie low while an investigation goes on about a possible homicide. Jackie had reason to hate the victim, who may have killed his beloved dog Honey. When he goes to the Amazon, he takes the Ludens' family retainer, a black man called Thomas Blaylock, who suddenly turns gay. And while there he begins a romance with fellow missionary Brother Jeremiah Flem, who returns with him to Alabama and a riot of further incidents.

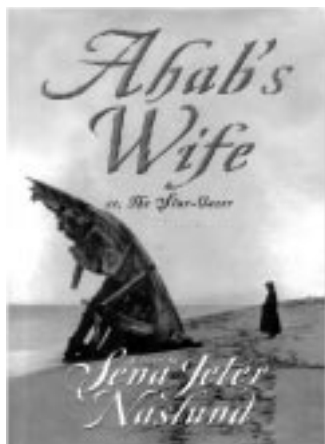
Such, in woefully succinct terms, is the plot of this wild, woolly, and madcap novel. Did Jackie really murder the dog-killer? Did he also, perhaps, do in his own father? Will Junior Wolmothe, scion and heir of fabulous Wolmothe Manor, come home from the sanitarium and take his rightful place in Ludens Bend society? Will Neva Jean, Junior's libidinous sister, manage to maneuver him out of the family fortune? Will Dr. Kavorkian make a visit to Jackie? And what of Sister Amy Grant, inveterate Wal-Mart shopper, whose home is invaded by aliens? With Jackie as our informant (and to call him an unreliable narrator is like calling Oscar a phrase-maker) you can be sure no event will go unembellished, no friend or foe let off the hook.

*Down from the Dog Star* is the funniest Southern novel I've read since *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It has scabrous wit, Rabelaisian mirth, reckless invention (let Jackie tell you about his greatest concept, Cemetery Golf), and delicious malice aforethought. Besides all that, it's a story of survival for all those who feel they're cut from a different cloth than the majority. Asked about his education, Daniel Glover says, "Well, I got out of high school with my life." That life has given us an exceptional voice, and a whale of a story. There should be T-shirts trumpeting "Jackie rules!"

*Randall Curb is a regular contributor to Oxford American, Poets & Writers, and other magazines and journals. He lives in Greensboro, Alabama.*

***Ahab's Wife or  
The Star-Gazer*  
by Sena Jeter Naslund  
William Morrow, 1999  
688 pp. Hardback, \$28**

Halley's Comet appears only once every 76 years, bringing with each sighting a new awe and wonderment. A similar event occurs (somewhat more frequently perhaps) when a novel that both challenges and



entertains appears on the literary horizon. Star-gazers of all sorts will enjoy the jaunt through 688 pages of *Ahab's Wife* by Sena Jeter Naslund, and it is not necessary that they re-read Melville's classic, or even have read it at all, to become totally immersed in this whirling-dervish tale.

Naslund captures her audience with an opening sentence in Melvillean style: "Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last." These words from Una Spenser, her heroine, launch readers on a voyage that takes them from the wilds of Kentucky, through the wildness of the South Pacific, to the seaport civilizations of New England. Along the way, Una, with her mother's help, flees a murderous, religiously fanatic father; learns about lighthouses, literature, and life from two sailors; disguises herself as a boy and sets sail on a whaler; encounters cannibalism in its rawest form; marries (more than once), has a child (more than once), loves passionately (often), loses faith (often), makes money (a lot), and much else—and lives to tell her story. She loses her innocence and receives her education from an assortment of characters, from the rich and famous, from the ignoble and the unknown: Rebekkah Swain, a woman of the world, and Susan Spenser, a runaway slave; a dwarf in wolf's clothing and a judge who loves fine china; Margaret Fuller and Maria Mitchell, early feminists and abolitionists; and Charlotte Hussey, who follows her passion, and her man, into the unknowns of the frontier. All these, and many more, Una artfully weaves into her story, just as she skillfully stitches the garments she makes for others, overstitching where necessary for endurance and enclosing little treasures for discovery later in the voyage.

In Una Spenser, Naslund has created the great American heroine—a woman who dares, in the midst of 19th-century attitudes and morés, to seek her own identity, in her own way. As a child, Una defies the authoritarian religious teachings of her father and his condemnation of her for refusing to believe; as a sixteen-year-old, she dares to flaunt tradition and society's expectations by seeking her adventure on the sea; during her maiden voyage on the *Sussex*, she concludes she does not need men to make her way in the world, yet she later goes to the marriage bed with Captain Ahab "with no shyness at all, but with love and purity and gladness of heart."

She is a complex individual, shaped by her environment and the literature she loves.

Sena Naslund stitches within the tapestry of her novel the lush, lyrical style of the 19th-century writers, embroidering her text with voluminous, authentic details of locales and the whaling industry and peopling it with historical figures and numerous literary allusions. At the end of the voyage, and her story, readers likely will agree with Una's pronouncement: "How else is life made real, but by story and song and fiery dance?" *Ahab's Wife or The Star-Gazer* does all that for appreciative readers.

*Elaine Hughes teaches English at the University of Montevallo.*



***Mama and Me and the Model T***  
by Faye Gibbons  
Morrow, 1999  
32 pp. Hardcover,  
\$16



***A Face in Every Window***  
by Han Nolan  
Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999  
264 pp. Hardcover,  
\$16

When Faye Gibbons's springtime *Mountain Wedding* was published in 1996, it earned praise in a *New York Times* book review, among others. Now, in *Mama and Me and the Model T*, Gibbons again delightfully portrays the melded Searcy-Long family. This time, the hijinks are in their autumn-bought motorcar. Mama is challenged by her husband's "any man can do it" driving explanations to the boys. So she and narrator Mandy ("We'll show 'em") set off on a wild ride round the yard and barn, convincing the males of the family that "this Model T belongs to all of us."

Ted Rand, who has illustrated both picture books, portrays the humor from flapping chickens to hatless scarecrow, and some scenes hint at Gibbons's own Alabama country home and dogs. The author has spoken of being inspired by the storytelling culture of her grandparents; it is often their now-gone world which she depicts, as in these two works.

Among the state's foremost writers for young people, Gibbons speaks at schools and professional meetings related to children's literature. Recipient of awards in both Alabama and Georgia, Gibbons has two forthcoming books and is at work on more. We can look forward to reading about the winter and summer adventures of the Searcy and Long families.

National Book Award winner (for Young People's Literature, 1997) and Alabamian Han Nolan has chosen a teenaged boy to be hero of her fourth novel, *A Face in Every Window*. Her previous works have featured adolescent girls struggling with issues of neo-Nazi violence, fanatic faith, or emotional instability, all within a context of family estrangement and reconciliation.

In this latest work, Nolan brings the concept of family to the forefront. JP (for James Patrick) O'Brien finds his secure world shattered when his dependable Grandma Mary suddenly dies. JP is left with Pap, who is "a wee bit slow in the head," and sickly Mam, who turns to an affair with her doctor. Mam enters a contest for a house, winning because she writes (using Harpo Marx's line) that she wants a home with a smiling "face in every window."

The new place soon is crowded with young people to whom Mam offers haven: the supposed drug-seller, the abused girl, the gay ex-footballer, the college dropout—until JP feels awash in a chaos which has destroyed his family. His struggle toward tolerance and acceptance is the novel's theme, his realization that "I had outgrown

my past before I could see . . . my future." Nolan individualizes each character, drawing the reader's interest and sympathy; her use of food and flowing creek as symbols builds toward the resolution of family love and trust.

*Joan Nist is Professor Emerita in Children's and Young Adult Literature at Auburn University.*

***They Say the Wind Is Red: The Alabama Choctaw—Lost in Their Own Land***  
by Jacqueline Anderson Matte  
Greenberry Publishing, 1999  
190 pp. Paper, \$19.95



Jacqueline Matte's fascination with the MOWA Choctaws in southern Alabama began sometime around 1980, when she was working on a history of Washington County and wanted to include a chapter on the Indians. She discovered over time that the story was richer than she had imagined. This mixed-blood community traces its roots to a small group of families who broke from the policy of their Choctaw brothers and fought against the whites in the Creek Indian War of 1813.

With the defeat of the Indians, they retreated to the swamps and pine thickets north of Mobile and took in other refugees over time—a smattering of Creeks and other Choctaws in the 1830s, who were seeking their escape from the Trail of Tears. There were non-Indians too who married into the group, but a sense of identity survived through the years, and in the 1980s, when Matte came along, the MOWA Choctaws were beginning their quest for recognition as a tribe. They asked Matte to help them document their story.

For nearly twenty years, she has worked with the tribe, poring through court records and old newspaper stories, studying the gravestones hidden in the forests, listening to the stories handed down by the elders. To Jacqueline Matte, the verdict is clear. This is a Native American community that has managed to survive against all the odds. The State of Alabama agrees, but the federal government is not yet convinced and, so far at least, has refused to grant the MOWAs recognition as a tribe.

The bureaucrats should read Matte's book—a well-researched and deeply felt account and a powerful story that needs to be preserved.

*Frye Gaillard is a author of more than a dozen books, including the 1998 As Long as the Waters Flow: Native Americans in the South and East. His 521 All-Stars is reviewed above.*

**North Across the River:  
A Civil War Trail of Tears**  
by Ruth Beaumont Cook  
Crane Hill, 1999  
226 pp. Hardback, \$19.95

In this carefully researched work, Ruth Beaumont Cook recounts a sorrowful episode of Civil War history. *North Across the River* tells the true story of two groups of cotton mill workers and their families forced from their homes by General William Tecumseh Sherman at the outset of his devastating sweep through Georgia.

Workers from textile mills at Sweetwater Creek and Roswell, Georgia, mostly women and children, were exiled to Indiana (north across the Ohio River) for the "crime" of producing textiles for the Confederacy in the summer of 1864. Cook follows them on wagons and trains through Nashville and beyond to new lives and uncertain futures. Dually separated from husbands and sons by war and deportation, these families struggled with illness, poverty, and marginal employment. Many never returned to the South.

A meticulous historian, Cook used interviews with descendants, archival materials, and rare records of oral accounts to bring this little-known story to life. Her telling interweaves the stories of several families, most notably that of ten-year-old Synthia Catherine Stewart, whose treasured Bible was stolen by a Yankee and (she claimed) returned to her by Sherman himself.

*North Across the River* is most engaging when Cook tells the anecdotes which, if not absolutely true, ring with the truth of painful experience. She describes how one Sweetwater Creek woman sold the homespun dress off her back to a "northern lady" who desired it. Another tale concerns a baby who falls from a wagon on his way north and is saved from being crushed by the wheels only by an abundance of mud. Fathers lost and rediscovered, separation and survival, and flirtations amid the ruins of a community will linger in the mind of the reader long after the names and dates, facts and figures are forgotten.

*Jackie Payne is associate publisher for sales and publicity at Black Belt Press in Montgomery.*

## Beyond the Night

*A Remembrance*

by Wayne Greenhaw

"...blends the New Age with the age-old in a lyrical celebration of all life."

**Harper Lee**

*To Kill a Mockingbird*

"...a lovely, loving bitter-sweet tribute to the glory of youth. Wayne Greenhaw is the best writer to come out of Alabama since Harper Lee."

**Winston Groom**

*Forrest Gump*

"Wayne Greenhaw has written a remembrance of extraordinary tenderness. It captures all the awe and strangeness of being a boy in the South. It seems part tall-tale, front-porch reminiscence, ghost story and family saga—all the stuff the South does better than anyone else."

**Pat Conroy**

*Prince of Tides*

## BLACK BELT PRESS

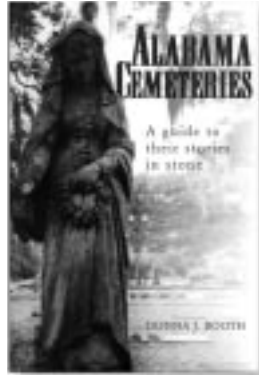
Montgomery, Alabama

*In bookstores, on-line,  
or from the publisher,*

**1-800-959-3245**

# BOOKS IN BRIEF

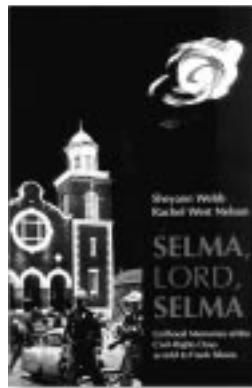
For those serious about seeing Alabama this summer, two new books can be added to the glove compartment stash: Donna Booth's *Alabama Cemeteries: A Guide to Their Stories in Stone* (Crane Hill, 1999) and Gay N. Martin's *Alabama Off the Beaten Path: A Guide to Unique Places* (The Globe Pequot Press, 1999). Booth's volume grew from an interest in markers and monuments to a fascination with the stories and legends of individual graves and burial grounds. Organized by region of the state, the book glosses the familiar, like the Coon Dog Memorial Graveyard in Colbert County, and the bizarre, like little Nadine Earles' playhouse in Lanett. The genuinely remarkable also appears—for instance, the death mask-adorned graves of Mount Nebo Cemetery in Carlton, Clarke County. Specific directions to locations are given at the end of each chapter.



Martin's guide, one in Globe Pequot's *Off the Beaten Path* series, covers not only the major sights of the state, but also the “small towns frozen in time and tucked-away treasures occasionally overlooked by the natives.” A sample treasure: the sight of angels, complete with halos and gold combat boots, in downtown Guntersville. Members of an Arab-based organization called the B-Team Angels, their mission is to bestow Earth Angel awards to those who bring happiness to others. And

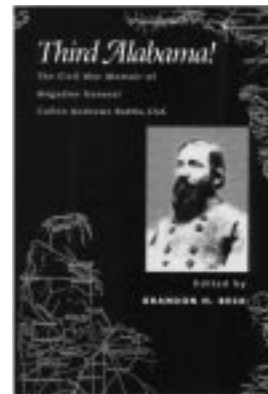
don't miss Daphne's Mancini's Antique Club, a combination bar/museum that houses a wide variety of antiques and novelty collections. The women's room features a male mannequin wearing a hinged fig-leaf and nothing else. The most curious are rewarded with a siren blast alerting one and all that she has peeked. Martin offers specific directions and insider tips. She also has a knack for revealing the familiar and making it fresh, which makes her book as good a guide to your own backyard as to the rest of the state.

If Selma is on your itinerary, add the recently published paperback edition of *Selma, Lord, Selma* (University of Alabama Press, 1980, 1997) to your list. Drawn from a series of interviews conducted by Frank Sikora with Sheyann Webb and Rachel West,



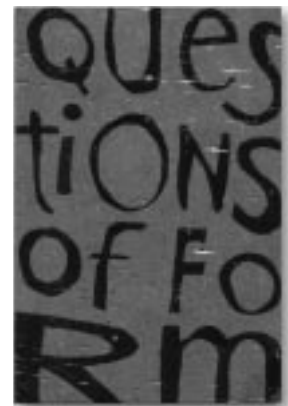
girls of eight and nine, respectively, when Bloody Sunday occurred. The book is a window onto a time and place that shaped both the state and the nation.

Ann Varnum's *Sunny Side Up* (LaVa Publications, 1998) is personal history as a public figure. Or, as its subtitle states, “an inside look at early morning TV,” in this case WTVY in Dothan. In anecdotal style—in fact, something like the television sound bytes that must be second nature to the author—Varnum covers her break into the biz in the mid-1970s. She shares many of her interviews with the famous—some nice and some not so nice—including Cloris Leachman (in the latter category) and Guy Lombardo (one of the good guys). Characters and events closer to home also appear, and Varnum shares her triumph over illness and witnesses to the power of faith in her life.



Civil War history is the subject of a recent University of Alabama Press publication, *Third Alabama! The Civil War Memoir of Brigadier General Cullen Andrews Battle, CSA* (2000). Battle's memoir introduced and edited by Brandon Beck, the Hugh D. McCormick Professor of Civil War history and director of the Civil War Institute at Shenandoah University. The Third Alabama was one of the first Deep South regiments to reach Virginia in 1861, and citizen-soldier Battle brings his experience as a journalist and lawyer to his account.

Among the poems appearing in award-winning poet Mickey Cleverdon's chapbook, *Questions of Form*, are works that originally appeared in *Negative Capability*, *Penumbra*, and *Red Bluff Review*. *Questions of Form* is a collaborative work: Cleverdon's husband, John, provided the woodcuts, and printer Ian Robertson of Slow Loris Press in Fairhope, the design, type, and production. The joining of words and images in such a form takes a special eye, and this is a lovely union.



# E V E N T S

## CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

### Southern Women Writer's Conference

APRIL 13-15, ROME, GEORGIA

Featured writers include Peggy Prenshaw, Lee Smith, and Jill McCorkle. Contact Emily Wright, English Department, Berry College, 706/233-4081 or ewright@berry.edu.

### Alabama Bound

APRIL 29, BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY, BIRMINGHAM

A book fair celebrating Alabama authors and publishers. 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. Free and open to the public. 205/556-3606 (See page 27)

### Alabama Writers' Symposium

MAY 4-6, MONROEVILLE

Third annual writers gathering. 334/575-3156, ext. 223. (See pages 26-27)

### Novel Writer's Workshop

MAY 20, TALLASSEE

Mary Carol Moran will offer a full-day session of her popular Novel Writer's Workshop. Also coming to Birmingham. Future dates TBA. Call River's Edge Publishing Company, 334/864-0180.

### Literature as Spirituality

SESSION I: JUNE 4-10

SESSION II: JUNE 11-17

SPRING HILL COLLEGE,  
MOBILE

The literature of C.S. Lewis as it reveals his spiritual journey will be one of the topics explored; another will be the use of poetry for spiritual growth. For more information, contact Graduate Studies, Spring Hill College: phone, 334/380-3094; fax, 334/460-2190; e-mail, grad@shc.edu.

## AUTHOR APPEARANCES

### DR. MARGARET DAVIS

April 11, Mobile

Dr. Davis will present "Father Abram Ryan: Confederate Poet of the South," a program on Mobile's beloved priest and poet who lived from 1839 to 1886. Fr. Ryan's writings illustrate his passions for both God and the South. The event will be held at Stewartfield, on the Spring Hill College campus. For more information, call 334/380-3870.

### VINCENT CZYZ

April 13, 4 p.m., Auburn

New York City author of *Adrift in a Vanishing City*, which received the Faulkner Prize for Short Fiction from the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society, will read at the AU Center for the Arts & Humanities/Pebble Hill. For more information, call 334/844-4947.

### JEANIE THOMPSON

April 16, 2 p.m., Florence

The author of two books of poetry, Thompson will read at the Florence-Lauderdale County Public Library, 218 N. Wood Avenue in Florence. The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Call 256-764-6629.

### THOMAS RABBITT

April 24, 4-6 p.m. Birmingham

Signing his new collection of poetry, *Enemies of the State*, published this spring by Black Belt Press, at Alabama Booksmith. For more information call Jake Reiss, 205-870-4242.

April 25, Florence

Appearance (details TBA), Florence Public Library. For further information, call 256/764-6629.

April 26, Tuscaloosa

Reading and *Black Warrior Review* Benefit. For details contact Michael Martone, 205/348-5065

April 27, 7:30 p.m. Montgomery

Reading at Huntingdon College, Montgomery

April 29, Birmingham

Participating in "Alabama Bound", Birmingham Public Library

May 1, 4 p.m., Auburn

Reading at AU Center for the Arts & Humanities/Pebble Hill.

Other appearances, details, general information—Jackie Payne or Jennifer Marcato, Black Belt Press, 334-265-6753.



**ALABAMA VOICES V****TOM FRANKLIN****April 25-28 6p.m., Eufaula**

Book signing and talk at the Eufaula Carnegie library.  
For more information, call Priscilla Tomin at 334/687-2337.

**May 10, 7 p.m., Birmingham**

Reading at UAB Honors House as part of the UAB Writer's Series.  
For more information, call Robert Collins, 205/334-4250.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THE LAFAYETTE  
HIGH SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE****May 11, 6 p.m., Auburn**

Book signing by the authors of this publication, created and  
published through this year's "Alabama Voices" series.  
AU Center for the Arts & Humanities/Pebble Hill.  
For more information, call 334/844-4947.

**GLENN FELDMAN****May 16, 4 p.m., Auburn**

Mr. Feldman, from the Center for Labor Education and Research, UAB,  
will speak on "Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949."

AU Center for the Arts & Humanities/Pebble Hill. For more information,  
call 334/844-4947.

**ALABAMA BOOKSMITH****May 21 3-6p.m., Birmingham**

Book signing for art/text catalogue of "Alabama Art 2000" edited by  
Alabama artist Nall. Writers include Fannie Flagg, Rick Bragg,  
Kathryn Tucker Windham, Charles Ghigna. Featured artists include  
Frank Fleming, Mose T., Chip Cooper, and 8 others.  
For more information, call 205/870-2402 or booksmith@mindspring.com.

**DRS. VIVIAN CARTER, CAROLINE GEBHARD,  
AND GWENDOLYN JONES****May 23, 4 p.m., Auburn**

These faculty of Tuskegee University will present "Tuskegee Women,"  
an Alabama Humanities Foundation-funded special program.  
AU Center for the Arts & Humanities/Pebble Hill.  
For more information, call 334/844-4947.

*Don't forget the Third Annual***ALABAMA WRITERS SYMPOSIUM**

May 4-6 in Monroeville, The Literary Capital of Alabama

*Featuring the presentations of the*

Harper Lee Award

for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 2000 to

**HELEN NORRIS***and the*

Eugene Current Garcia Award

for Alabama's Distinguished Literary Scholar 2000 to

**DON NOBLE***Hosted by ALABAMA SOUTHERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE*

Register online: [www.ascc.edu](http://www.ascc.edu) or call 334/575-3156, ext 223

email [dreed@ascc](mailto:dreed@ascc)

**THE MYSTERIOUS POWER OF POETRY***Continued from page 9***SPRING AND FALL TO A YOUNG CHILD***by Gerald Manley Hopkins*

Márgarét, are you gríeving  
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
 Léaves, líke the things of man, you  
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
 Áh! ás the heart grows older  
 It will come to such sights colder  
 By and by, nor spare a sigh  
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
 And yet you wíll weep and know why.  
 Now no matter, child, the name:  
 Sórrow's spríngs áre the same.  
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
 It ís the blight man was born for,  
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

**Thomas Upchurch** runs Capitol Book and News in Montgomery:  
 "My favorite poem is "Thanatopsis"/And here's my brief  
 synopsis:/Everybody dies, and so will I."

**THANATOPSIS***(Verse 1 of 4)**by William Cullen Bryant*

To him who in the love of Nature holds  
 Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
 A various language; for his gayer hours  
 She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
 And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
 Into his darker musings, with a mild  
 And healing sympathy, that steals away  
 Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts  
 Of the last bitter hour come like a blight  
 Over thy spirit, and sad images  
 Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,  
 And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,  
 Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart;—  
 Go forth, under the open sky, and list  
 To Nature's teachings, while from all around—  
 Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—  
 Comes a still voice— . . .



**Save this Date**  
**Saturday • April 29, 2000**

**ALABAMA**  
**BOUND**

A Book Fair  
*Celebrating Alabama Authors  
 and Publishers*

**10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Meet over 50 Alabama Writers and Publishers!

Buy books • Have them signed!

Hear authors read and talk about their books!

*Join us for the fun!*

*This event is FREE and open to the public.*

For more information call (205) 226-3606.

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 Cunningham Devoto, Robert Inman,  
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# Newly Published Directory Designed as Literary Resource

The Alabama Writer's Forum is proud to announce the publication of the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory*. This first-ever compendium of literary information contains a listing of contemporary Alabama authors who have published at least one full-length collection or won a major award, by genre; literary journals; literary presses; annual conferences, symposia and events; writers organizations; prizes, awards, grants and fellowships. In addition independent booksellers in Alabama, public libraries, and local arts councils are listed. Other useful information includes a description of the office of poet laureate, information about archiving authors' works in Alabama, a literary landmarks tour, information about the Alabama Writers' Forum and its programs, and an author index.

"With the publication of the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory*, the state now has a valuable new resource for writers, editors, conference planners, librarians, and readers," said Jeanie Thompson, AWF executive director. The directory is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts through ArtsReach and additional funds are supplied through the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

The Alabama Writers' Forum staff hopes that answers to these frequently asked questions about the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory* will be useful.

**Q** My listing contains an error. How can I correct it?

**A** If your listing has a factual error, such as a wrong telephone number, please send your correction in writing or via email to the Alabama Writers' Forum at the address above.

**Q** I am a writer and my listing seems incomplete because I have published more than is listed or I have won more awards for my work.

**A** In compiling the directory, the editors determined to list only full length publications and major awards, for space considerations. The writer listings are not intended to be

complete resumes for writers, but should be sufficient for someone to determine if that writer might be a good panelist at a conference or guest writer to invite to an event, or to contact the writer. In the case where a writer has published books too numerous to list, a sample of recent books is given.

**Q** I filled out the writer survey and I have published poems and short stories (no full-length book) and have won awards. Why am I not listed?

**A** The editors decided to list writers with at least one full-length book publication or one major award in the directory. However, all of the writer surveys are being compiled into a complete database for the Forum that is searchable by author name, location, and by genre. No legitimately

published or recognized writer who filled out a survey will be excluded from the database. The Forum regrets any confusion this process has caused any writers in Alabama.

Since the Forum's inception, according to Thompson, people have wanted a directory that included published writers, places where writers gather, places to publish, and other related information. "If we had tried to do this even five years ago, we would not have had the resources to accomplish the goal, so we feel 2000 is a great year to publish the directory," she said. Thompson says that the Forum has already mailed a complimentary copy to everyone listed in the directory and that feedback is arriving about listings that may need changes, corrections or additions. "Of course we knew that the moment we published the directory, there would be another writer eligible to be included by virtue of his or her having published a book or won a major award. That's the way of all resource books. We welcome people's comments and information for subsequent issues of the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory*," she said.

Thompson said that free copies of the directory were provided to all libraries in the state. The Forum is currently making arrangements to have the directory available in bookstores throughout the state and at many of the literary conferences and events still to take place

published or recognized writer who filled out a survey will be excluded from the database. The Forum regrets any confusion this process has caused any writers in Alabama.

**Q** How will the comprehensive Literary Resources Database be used?

**A** The database will be a multi-use database than can be updated regularly. One example of a use of the database would be to provide literary journals or presses seeking Alabama authors within a specific genre a list of those writers in Alabama. Another typical use would be by program directors at conferences who wish to contact, for example, all working children's authors or screenwriters in the state. Even if a writer has not published a full-length work yet, the database would provide that writer's name

within the comprehensive genre listing. Finally, a writers' event that serves a portion of the state might like to see all published authors within a certain geographic part of Alabama. Again, the database could provide such a selection by the Forum's zones or by zip codes.

**Q** When will the Directory be updated?

**A** The Forum will publish a new edition of the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory* when supplies of this first edition are depleted and current data has been updated, probably in early 2002.

If you have a question that is not addressed here about the directory, please write or e-mail the Alabama Writers' Forum.



# L I T E R A R Y N E W S

## AWARDS

The **Alabama Library Association** announced on March 17th its **Alabama Author Award winners for 2000**. **William Cobb** of Montevallo is the recipient of the fiction award for his collection of short stories, *Somewhere in All This Green*, published by Black Belt Press. The award for non-fiction goes to **Dr. Wayne Flynt** of Auburn University for *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, published by the University of Alabama Press. **Charles Ghigna** of Birmingham received the juvenile literature prize for *Animal Trunk: Silly Poems to Read Aloud*, published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

The authors will be honored during a luncheon at the annual meeting of the Alabama Library Association in Birmingham on April 6. For further information about the awards, contact Anne Knight, Author Awards Committee, 205-226-3742.

(Houghton Mifflin, \$20) was the poetry winner.

The awards were announced on February 14, 2000.

## MAJOR LITERARY GATHERINGS

Alabama writers will gather for the third annual **Alabama Writer's Symposium** in Monroeville on May 4-6, 2000. Alabama writers participating in the symposium include Clyde Bolton, Fred Bonnie, Loretta Cobb, Sandra King Conroy, Robert Ely, Fannie Flagg, Tom Franklin, Anita Miller Garner, Wayne Greenhaw, Anthony Grooms, Melinda Haynes, Michael Knight, Jacqueline Anderson Matte, Helen Norris, Tom Rabbit, Sonia Sanchez, Margaret Searcy, Natasha Trethewey, Philip Beidler, Brett Cox, Wayne Flynt, John Hafner, Bert Hitchcock, Don Noble, Cathy Power, Frank Toland, and Sue Walker.

The symposium opens Thursday evening, May 4th, with a



William Cobb



Dr. Wayne Flynt



Charles Ghigna

**Kennette Harrison's** book, *Dowsing for Light*, has been named **1999 Book of the Year by the Alabama State Poetry Society**. This is the second year in a row that a publication by Elk River Review Press has garnered this honor.

Copies of *Dowsing for Light* are available for \$12.00 per copy (plus \$2 postage & handling) from Elk River Review Press, 606 Coleman Avenue, Athens, AL 35611-3216.

A memoir about growing up in a South Georgia junkyard and a novel about a North Carolina teacher's homecoming took two of the top honors in the Southeast Booksellers Association Book Awards. Janisse Ray's *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (Milkweed Editions, \$19.95) won in the Nonfiction category, while Fred Chappell's *Look Back All the Green Valley* (Picador, \$24) was named Best Novel. *Bugs and Critters I Have Known* by Ann Hieskell Rickey (Old Canyon Press, \$12.95) won in the Children's category, and *Elegy for the Southern Drawl* by **Rodney Jones**

banquet featuring a reading and discussion by Fannie Flagg, Alabama native and author of the best-seller, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, which was produced by Universal Studios as a feature film. Friday's events include discussion sessions, book signings, a picnic on the Monroeville Courthouse lawn, a performance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and an evening of light jazz and conversation.

Also on Friday, the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 2000 (recipient selected by the Alabama Writer's Forum) and the Eugene Current Garcia Award for Alabama's Distinguished Literary Scholar 2000 (recipient selected by the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama) will be presented at the Awards Luncheon. The Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts will present the Harper Lee Award, and the Executive Director of the Alabama Humanities Foundation will present the Eugene Current Garcia Award.

Saturday's schedule includes a keynote luncheon address by



Sonia Sanchez, Alabama author and winner of the 1995 American Book Award. Other Saturday events include tours of Monroeville and discussion sessions featuring writers Helen Norris, Michael Knight, and Anthony Grooms. Events will be held on the campus of Alabama Southern Community College, at the Monroeville Community House, and at the Monroe County Heritage Museum in downtown Monroeville.

The symposium is a project of the Alabama Center for Literary Arts and is sponsored by Alabama Southern Community College, Sybil H. Smith Charitable Trust, Alabama Humanities Foundation, Alabama State Council on the Arts, and George Landegger. It is produced in cooperation with Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce, Monroe County Heritage Museums, the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama, Auburn University Center for the Arts and Humanities, and the Alabama Writer's Forum.

Visit the symposium's website at [www.ascc.edu](http://www.ascc.edu) for schedule updates and registration information. For more information or to request a registration form, please call Donna Reed 334/575-3156, ext.223, or e-mail [dreed@ascc.edu](mailto:dreed@ascc.edu). Space is limited for some events, so early registration is advised.

The Birmingham Public Library presents **Alabama Bound**, a book fair celebrating Alabama authors and publishers on April 29th, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The location is downtown at 2100 Park Place, at the Birmingham Public Library. The book fair will allow the public to meet authors and publishers, buy their books,

and hear them talk about their work. Scheduled to appear are Mark Childress, author of *Crazy in Alabama*; Anne George, *Murder Makes Waves* and *This One and Magic Life*; Kathryn Tucker Windham, *Encounters* and *The Bridal Wreath Bush*; Charles Ghigna, *Animal Trunk: Silly Poems to Read Aloud* and *Mice are Nice*.

In addition to these headliners, more than 50 other Alabama authors will be in attendance. Authors and books cover a wide range of subjects, including history, self-help, travel, cookbooks, photography, art, fiction, poetry, and romance. Scheduled for the day are Felicity Allen, Leah Rawls Atkins, Jim Bennett, Helen Blackshear, Clyde Bolton, Fred Bonnie, A. Faye Boykin, Rick Bragg, Edwin Brown, Virginia Pounds Brown, Jim Buford, Loretta Cobb, William Cobb, Ruth Beaumont Cook, Dennis Covington, Vicki Covington, Brent Davis, Colin Davis, Pat Cunningham DeVoto, Helen Ellis, Glenn Feldman, Wayne Flynt, Tom Franklin, Faye Gibbons, Vanessa Davis Griggs, Aileen Kilgore Henderson, Tim Hollis, Peter Huggins, Norman Jetmundsen, Jr., Allen Johnson, Andrew Mannis, Jackie Matte, June Mays, John McCormack, Jan Midgley, Marianne Motes, Brenda Moore, Daniel Moore, David Myers, Helen Norris, Gregory E. Pence, Phyllis Perry, Thomas Rabbitt, Jim Reed, Carolyn Green Satterfield, Dale Short, Frank Sikora, Mike Steward, Jeanie Thompson, Daniel Wallace, and Gayle Wilson. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 205/556-3606.



## “AN OTHER SOUTH”

Continued from page 10



Hank Lazer

A multimedia performance of “Brambu Drezi” in 1997 included video monitors, a band, two dancers, and several large paintings on stage.

Admittedly, in the age of electronic communication, and the fast-food, strip-mall homogenization of America, regional distinctiveness is becoming an increasingly murky phenomenon. The poetry of *An Other South* represents an important effort to present colliding mythologies, perspectives, cultures, visions, explanations, decompositions, and recyclings of this intriguing contemporary period of change in Southern life. This new writing offers a glimpse into the changing nature of Southern culture as our poetry moves away from mere nostalgia and memory into an exciting embodiment of the varied promises of the present moment.



*Hank Lazer's books of poetry include As It Is, 3 of 10, and Doublespace: Poems 1971-1989. The 1999 issue of New Orleans Review featured his essay “Kudzu Textuality: Toward a New Southern Poetry, 2,” an overview of this newly emerging innovative Southern poetry. His poetry and essays have been translated into Chinese.*

## THE BACK PAGE

## The Habit of Looking

People often ask me for advice—my friends, my children, and, occasionally, my wife, who, she says, values my good judgment. Bless her for saying that. In any case, whenever someone asks me for advice about writing, I usually comply. What follows, then, is some advice about poetry writing. If it helps you, great. All I can say is that it's helped me. And don't worry about the tone. You have to sound reliable—and maybe even a bit imperious—when you go into the advice business.

Trust yourself. Let your imagination take you where it wants to go. You're on a journey; enjoy the ride.

Stay open. Don't try to force the poem in a certain direction. Let the experience unfold as you discover it. Be ready to reorder that experience as you work on, consider, and think further about your poem.

I know this sounds grandiose, but (come on, admit it) your concern is truth and emotional honesty although—and here's the tricky part—you may have to lie to tell the truth. I have more to say about this issue. If you become so mired in the facts and refuse to change things because "that's the way it really happened," then you may find it hard to tell the truth.

Telling the truth often means paying attention to the sounds words make. If the words don't seem right when you read them aloud, they probably aren't. Change them.

To get at the truth, you may need to change your perspective. Do it willingly and gladly. It will free you to explore another human life. Along the way you will probably learn something you didn't know about yourself. That may or may not be a pleasant experience.

Be prepared. Keep a notebook as well as your favorite writing instrument handy. Remember people, remember things, remember places. Mix up the people, places, and things when you need to.

Look—really look—at what you call home, at your native landscape. Make this a habit.

Go on a trip or move. Then come back home. You'll be surprised how interesting, curious, or weird everything looks. Enjoy this experience.

If you find yourself stuck, think of the first three things that come into your head. Say, one red shoe, a crumpled gum wrapper, and a black-jack oak. Write your poem using those three things.

Let your imagination make the connections among those things. It will, and in ways you never thought possible.

Trust the poem. It is smarter than you are.



*Award-winning poet Peter Huggins teaches at Auburn University and in Huntingdon College's creative writing program. His latest book is Hard Facts, published by Livingston Press in 1998.*



## MOSQUITOES

BY PETER HUGGINS

I do not need to offer them  
The blood of a black ram  
Like Odysseus  
Among the dead.

They swarm around my legs and arms.  
The drink my blood, they feast on me.  
I am their prey,  
Their mark, their victim.

Their singing is a kind of truth.  
I disregard it at my peril.  
They are Tiresias  
Who tells the future.

They are Achilles, Agamemnon,  
Hercules, great warrior.  
They are Ajax,  
Stuck in the past.

They are the women I have known,  
Far more deadly than you'd guess,  
Who breed danger  
Wherever they go.

They make me wild, I splatter blood,  
My legs and arms are wet with it.  
My eyes water,  
I leave this pond.

As the red-eyed full moon rises,  
My malarial sweats begin.  
At your dusky touch  
Your passion, I tremble.

## SOUTH

BY PETER HUGGINS

I returned to smell the dark.  
That other country had  
No scent I recognized as home.  
The French and English street names

Were not unfamiliar. In New Orleans  
I had grown up with Chartres,  
Napoleon, and the muses  
Clio and Polyhymnia.

On the Mississippi River,  
I smelled the world,  
Coffee and bananas,  
Cars, silk, wheat and wine.

The beautiful St. Lawrence  
I admired from a distance.  
The Mississippi was mine.  
It flowed through me as I danced.

The long twilight on the river,  
Running on the levee;  
The long evening on Lake Ponchartrain,  
Drinking the salt air;

These brought me to myself,  
The cracked and broken ice  
A cold dream to remember  
When the heat became intolerable.

Exiled Jefferson Davis  
Lived for a time  
In Montreal as I did.  
I fled my past to study

The past and escaped, I thought,  
The legacy I was born to.  
I theorized the class struggle  
In eighteenth century France

And nineteenth century Britain.  
I edged my way to the  
Twentieth century disasters,  
The lights all going out.

I refused the easy charm  
Of exile, I rubbed  
My fingers in the green grass,  
I smelled the dark.

Awash in the diesel, the tugs  
Pushed barges upriver.  
The lions in the Audubon Zoo growled.  
History ran on.

She said, "Trust me.  
Lie still.  
Listen. Music  
Will tell you what you want to know."

# READ ALL ABOUT THE ARTS IN ALABAMA

*Grant Guidelines*, published annually, provides comprehensive information on the programs and services of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. The publication includes funding guidelines and all forms necessary for a grant application.

*Alabama Arts* is a semi-annual publication about the arts and artists of Alabama.

*The Touring Arts Directory* lists Alabama's performing artists who are available for performances in local communities. Also listed are visual arts exhibitions available from Alabama art museums.

*Alabama Arts Education Resources* is a new publication which provides a detailed listing of educational resources and services available from more than 100 arts groups in Alabama.

The State Arts Council's Folklife Program works cooperatively with other organizations to produce a large number of publications, CDs, and tapes which focus on the traditional culture of Alabama. A recent publication, *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book: A Primitive Baptist Song Tradition* is a book of essays with a CD recording documenting the history and current use of an historic hymn book.

The State Arts Council also publishes a weekly email newsletter, *AlabamaArts*, that contains recent arts news, grant lists, and other information about the arts and artists of Alabama. To subscribe, go to <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/AlabamaArts>

Call the Alabama State Council on the Arts or check the website to find out how to order these publications.



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Montgomery, Alabama 36130-1800  
334/242-4076 or fax 334/240-3269  
web site <http://www.arts.state.al.us>  
email [staff@arts.state.al.us](mailto:staff@arts.state.al.us)





# NOW AVAILABLE

*The Alabama Literary Resources Directory* is the first compendium of contemporary authors, literary presses and magazines, writers' conferences and events, and listings of where literary folks gather ever produced in Alabama. Funded by the ArtsReach program of The National Endowment for the Arts, this resource guide should be invaluable for anyone working in literary arts programming. In addition, teachers will find resources for their students and writers themselves will now have one place they can go for useful information about publishing and the craft of writing.

For more information or to purchase the *Alabama Literary Resources Directory*, call **334/242-4076**, ext.233, or write:

The Alabama Writers' Forum  
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