

Every year the board of directors of Small Press Traffic Literary Arts Center votes a Lifetime Achievement Award to a living writer of distinction. Past recipients of this award have included Barbara Guest, Jackson Mac Low, and Carl Rakosi. This year the board is happy to announce that the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award goes to Joanne Kyger.

Kyger made an auspicious debut as the golden girl of the Spicer-Duncan circle of the late 1950s here in San Francisco. Within a month or so everyone wanted a piece of Kyger, and she became associated one by one with the fluid, mercurial poetry scenes around the "New American Poetry." Like her best writing, she was everywhere at once, deep inside the Beat movement, all over Japan and India, up and down the San Francisco Renaissance, our ambassador to the New York scenes of Ted Berrigan and Anne Waldman, the mainstay of Bolinas, and a seer in the Buddhist poetics of the Jack Kerouac School at Naropa University in Boulder. That's just the locations; deeper underneath, the substance of her many lives created, over forty-five years, a new poetic freedom. Based on frank and sensual observation, an innovating line, a sometimes acerbic wit, and a devotion to the 'golden root' of compassion, Kyger's poetry (collected in *AS EVER: SELECTED POEMS*) continue to win her the admiration of numerous generations.

In addition, the Board has selected five outstanding books of poetry to represent our choice for the Books of the Year 2004.

Jeanne Heuving, *Incapacity* (Chiasmus Press, 2004)

*INCAPACITY*, Jeanne Heuving's dazzling concoction complicates what she calls the documentary impulse with an arresting set of seizures, in which individual poems are sites of revolution from inside the poet, the policy that old time socialists called "entryism." Moving through the various fields of *INCAPACITY* we are struck over and over again by the happy success with which Heuving's efforts crown a dozen disparate projects, like the best kind of conceptual art.

Christine Hume, *Alaskaphrenia* (New Issues, 2004).

With *ALASKAPHRENIA*, the wildly talented Christine Hume hits her stride about two lines into the very first poem, then never lets up all the way to the roller-coaster finish. The title suggests a withering, icy dementia, like Judith Anderson in *Rebecca*, but instead we find a lucid, warm, disjunction which welcomes the mind and the body to join in as one, several entrances to each of her splendid rooms.

Paolo Javier, *The Time at the End of This Writing* (Ahadada Books, 2004)

Paolo Javier's poems hoarsely ponder poetic lineage, a lineage that includes the likes of Rilke, Neruda, and Berrigan. His romantically tongue-in-cheek pastiches are told to and/or from the voices of lead characters in ethically and ethnically charged movies. His language swings between Shakespearean English and the slang modernisms of a lyric Tagalog, and the rumble is almost a Dos Passos convocation of power and everyone. *THE TIME AT THE END OF THIS WRITING* is the first book of an unusually promising poet.

Kaia Sand, *Interval* (Edge Books, 2004).

Like our Lifetime Achievement Winner, Joanne Kyger, Kaia Sand has spent a long time thinking about ecosystems – systems of feeling, of nature, of duration – and about the political implications of all the above. Like Kyger, her thought is part and parcel of the beauty of the work, dissolved in the line, broken up by the rain and the tears of outrage. Does a divine presence touch all our lives, or is it all but an accident of perception? Or some kind of ozone thing like you see on TV?

Ron Silliman, *UNDER ALBANY* (Salt Publishing, 2004).

It may be Ron Silliman's single most satisfying work. *UNDER ALBANY* lies outside of *THE ALPHABET*, Ron Silliman's magnum opus, and yet strangely inside of it as well, as it is a free writing of each of the hundred sentences of *ALBANY*, part of the ABC volume Tuumba published 25 years ago. *UNDER ALBANY* reveals a new Silliman, a newish Language Poetry, and more about work and art and political action, than most other books published in 2004 all stacked together and made into shingles.

In addition, as we did last year, we present a special award to a book of another order entirely. This year's special award goes to the editors of the anthology *BITING THE ERROR: FORTY WRITERS EXPLORE NARRATIVE* (Coach House Books, 2004) – Mary Burger, Robert Glück, Camille Roy, and Gail Scott. No other book has ever so completely noted the instability of the line between fiction and poetry. In a time when markers of genre are once again being retrofitted to last another millennium, to cater to the market, we applaud this simple, comprehensive demonstration.

– Kevin Killian, for the Board of Directors, Small Press Traffic Literary Arts Center, San Francisco 2005