

The Bridge 2009 – 1st Place Winner

Julianna McCarthy - Frazier Park, CA

LAMENT FOR KIERAN PRATHER

He always claimed Christmas should mourn the inevitable
great end and Easter sing the bright fact of Christ's birth.
When he sank into death on December's Holy Eve
I think he willed it.

Reliably contrary, he traded the Seminary for the baths and bars.
A mugger's knife outed him. Blood told.
He took up every cross he could lay his hands on,
Followed Him into the streets, the wards,
the cardboard bedrooms.

He fed and comforted, was harassed and jailed.
Dying, he slept on the floor of the soup kitchen.
To be near the coffee, he said.

His wake was a wonder. Half of Cesar Chavez Boulevard,
the other half from Hazard, tramped to Britannia Street
to eat for him, drink for him, sing to him.
The children, who'd dragged chairs beside
his casket, climbed up to kiss him,
to pat his face. To smooth his serape.