

future studies of Jones by scholars who know Ojibwa and can judge Jones's translations. Perhaps an Ojibwa scholar would see the missionary more critically than Smith also in matters not relating to translation. But to the extent that a white person can enter a bi-cultural world, this is a valuable book.

—Kristin Herzog
University of North Carolina

Gary Soto. *The Elements of San Joaquin*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977) 56 pp., \$5.95 paper.

California's fertile San Joaquin Valley is the setting of this first published collection of poems by one of Chicano literature's leading voices [other books include *The Tale of Sunlight* (1978), *Father Is a Pillow Tied to a Broom* (1980), *Where Sparrows Work Hard* (1981), and *Black Hair* (1985)]. Thirty-eight poems comprise the three sections which take the reader through a series of disturbing images of the region. (Critic Bruce-Novoa has compared *Elements* with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*). In the first poem, "San Fernando Road," migrants are described in the language of travail as men "Whose arms/Were bracelets/Of burns/And whose families/Were a pain/They could not/Shrug off." The odyssey ends with "Braly Street" where the past and the present come together in bleak images as the poetic voice views the empty lot where his home once stood: "When I come/To where our house was,/I come to seeds/And a sewer line tied off/Like an umbilical cord." Generative images of home and seeds are in unsettling discord with the metaphor of a sewer line as umbilicus. Other poems deal with rape, drowning babies, drunkenness, drugs, mental illness, hunger, and death.

As the title of the volume suggests, many poems are linked to rural agriculture. In "Field Poem," for example, the narrator looks back through the smashed window of a bus to see the fields ever awaiting the migratory Chicano farm workers: "I saw the leaves of cotton plants/Like small hands/Waving goodbye." By humanizing the image of the agricultural product, Soto imbues the scene with an unexpected pathos and beauty. In another migrant poem, "History," the narrator recalls his grandmother's journey from Mexico. It ends with a stanza characterizing all Chicano field workers: "From Taxco to San Joaquin,/ Delano to Westside,/The places/In which we all begin." In "Emilio" there is another type of journey, one in which an old man goes home to Mexico in his death dreams, returning to his young wife. Other poems in the collection deal with urban subjects, frequently portrayed in violent terms.

“The Morning They Shot Tony Lopez, Barber and Pusher Who Went Too Far 1958” treats a drug problem, while “Copper” is about boys searching the city’s streets for cars to strip of their valuable metals.

The Elements of San Joaquin is a significant book in the evolution of Chicano poetry. It represents a change in direction from many of the earlier politically motivated, more group-oriented writings, frequently strident and artless, to more intensely personal and well-crafted expression. Negative elements of Chicano life are presented just as in poems of the political movement, but the view here is more universal, and the human victims of social and political forces at a given point in history are portrayed with a more chilling effect. Soto is an outstanding poet, and the importance of this first collection cannot be overstated.

—Carl R. Shirley
University of South Carolina

Gary Soto. *Small Faces*. (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1986) 142 pp., \$8.00 paper.

This slim, superb collection is Soto’s second foray into the field of prose (*Living Up The Street: Narrative Recollections* was the 1985 American Book Award winner). The thirty-one vignettes in *Small Faces*, written in December, 1983, and between June and August, 1984, are imbued with warmth, charm, and nostalgia. They touch subjects such as human nature, human relationships, and love, all from a very personal viewpoint—that of the author. During the course of the book, we come to know the poet, his wife and daughter, and his friends. Selections treat the narrator’s college days, travel, poetry and philosophy, as well as the mundane episodes of his daily life. The sketches are not presented chronologically, nor are they arranged thematically, so readers can deal with them out of sequence if they so desire. They are short—from one to four pages—and because each is an individual unit, one need not set aside a large block of time to read the collection. (However, the book is so charming that this reviewer read the entire volume in one sitting.)

The subject of ethnicity is treated only briefly in several stories. For instance, in the first and one of the longest pieces, “Like Mexicans,” the poet relates that in his own family, his grandmother has the entire world classified as Mexicans, blacks, Asians, and Okies, and she lectures the young man on the virtues of the Mexican girl: she can cook and acts like a woman, not a man, in her husband’s home. When the time comes for his first meeting with his future wife’s family, who are Japanese-Americans, he concludes that they are “like Mexicans, only different.” In “June,” the narrator exposes the injustice of racism when he remembers a high