

NORCAL BESTSELLERS

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. **'The Casual Vacancy'**
J.K. Rowling
2. **'Gone Girl'**
Gillian Flynn
3. **'Telegraph Avenue'**
Michael Chabon
4. **'The Racketeer'**
John Grisham
5. **'This Is How You Lose Her'**
Junot Diaz

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. **'Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail'**
Cheryl Strayed
2. **'I Could Pee On This'**
Francesco Marciuliano
3. **'Barefoot Contessa Foolproof: Recipes You Can Trust'**
Ina Garten, Clarkson Potter
4. **'How Music Works'**
David Byrne
5. **'Killing Kennedy: The End of Camelot'**
Bill O'Reilly

TRADE PAPERBACK FICTION

1. **'Cloud Atlas'**
David Mitchell
2. **'The Life of Pi'**
Yann Martel
3. **'The Perks of Being a Wallflower'**
Stephen Chbosky
4. **'The Marriage Plot'**
Jeffrey Eugenides
5. **'State of Wonder'**
Ann Patchett

TRADE PAPERBACK NONFICTION

1. **'In the Garden of Beasts'**
Erik Larson
2. **'The Swerve'**
Stephen Greenblatt
3. **'Bossypants'**
Tina Fey
4. **'Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey Into the Afterlife'**
Eben Alexander
5. **'How to Tell If Your Cat is Plotting to Kill You'**
Matthew Inman

The Indie Bestseller List is based on reporting from independent bookstores across Northern California. For information on more titles, please visit IndieBound.org

ARTHUR SZE

Chinese-American poet featured artist at third annual Morton Marcus Memorial Reading

{ **SATURDAY** 7 p.m.: Cabrillo College Samper Recital Hall, Aptos; Free; www.mortonmarcus.com }

By **WALLACE BAINE**

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For those who've never attempted it, translation from one language to another seems like a pretty straightforward affair. You see "amigo," you read "friend."

But translation is rarely so simple. Many times, in fact, particularly when it comes to poetry, translation is itself an art, as challenging and ambiguous as the original act of writing.

"I always tell people that translation is an impossible task," said poet Arthur Sze, the author of eight books of poetry as well as "The Silk Dragon," a collection of poems translated from Chinese.

"I always remember the phrase in Italian which translates 'translators' as 'traitors.' Whether you're translating Italian into English, or Chinese into English, it's impossible to carry the music, the sounds, the rhythms of that original language."

Sze is a New York-born Chinese-American poet who grew up speaking Mandarin, though, he says, he could not read or write it very well. Later, he turned to Chinese poetry as a source of inspiration, and found himself drawn into the art of translation.

"When I'm translating from Chinese to English, I'm looking for a kind of rigor and a kind of spontaneity with language, although obviously the tones - Chinese is a tonal language - can't be carried over into English. I'm looking very carefully at the multiple meanings of the original Chinese characters, thinking about how I can translate that into English and make it a translation that isn't a stiff one, but works as poetry."

Sze is the keynote reader at the third annual Morton Marcus Memorial Poetry Reading at Cabrillo College on Saturday, in honor of the beloved Santa Cruz poet, teacher and critic who died in 2009. Marcus himself was interested in translating poetry, having translated the work of the Serbian poet Vasko Popa.

Sze, 61, is of a later generation than Marcus, but, he said, as a student at UC Berkeley in the early 1970s, he was a reader and admirer of the Santa Cruz poet.

"I never had the pleasure of meeting him, although I enjoyed and admired his work and followed it through Kayak magazine," said Sze in reference to the liter-

ary journal published in the '70s and '80s in Santa Cruz by George Hitchcock.

Sze's parents were both born in Beijing, but didn't meet until they had both come to the United States. His parents wanted young Arthur to pursue a "safe and professional" livelihood, and with the idea of becoming a scientist, he enrolled in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But it was at MIT that Sze met the British-born poet Denise Levertov, who inspired him to drop the scientific field and move to Berkeley where he studied classical Chinese.

For the past 40 years, however, Sze has lived in New Mexico, where he taught American Indian student for more than 20 years from a wide array of tribes from around the United States. So, not only has

Chinese culture remained a strong strain in his work, Native American culture "has been a strong influence in my work. And it's not something abstract that comes out of a textbook. It's from intimately working with students of different ages and backgrounds from all these different cultures."

His most recent book of poetry is "The Ginkgo Light" (Copper Canyon), in which he explores eco-poetical themes of survival and transformation.

What makes translating Chinese poetry into English even more audacious, he said, is the context in which poetry exists in Chinese culture, both ancient and contemporary. "When you're looking at poems across a thousand years, you have poets writing in very different forms, in very different voices, with very different visions. So it's quite a challenge to work with the distinctive characteristics of each poet."

