

Sacramento's Literary
Review and Calendar:

Poetry Now

January 2005
Vol. 11, No. 01

A Publication of the Sacramento Poetry Center

Light from Light

In the beginning movement
her rosined bow cello strings
hum hallows framing mourning doves
nesting in June walnut, daughter
between fields west and quiet
town north listens to her sister
reed a deep clarinet heat wave
contrasting cool delta breeze deep river
running cold to overcast ocean
as this "which came first?"
question falls like floating feather
cottonwood seeds spilling into the
afternoon dog chasing its tail to no avail
in background noise of swings and children,
elegance coming from similar momentum,
"very good from very god,"
simple expression itself significant enough
since none of it would have ever been
if it wasn't meant to be.

—David Humphreys

This Issue:

Robert Abplanalp
James DenBoer
Joseph Drogos
Carol Frith
Taylor Graham
David Humphreys
Kathy Kieth
Edward Mycue
Simon Perchik
Pearl Stein Selinsky
Michael Spring
Philip A. Waterhouse
Paul Watsky

Spider Silk

The protein unfolds modular,
sacrificial bonds opening
to reform when the load lifts,
five times stronger than steel,
lustrous, flexible toughness,
fortunate mechanism
web ratlines & rigging
above the careening hull
of blue hypothesis foam white bow
125 million years of gene wizard
dragline silk woven into buzz
cut body armor for the rough sawn
leatherneck's flak jacket
standing at the frontier
between one set of intractable
assumptions and another.

—David Humphreys

Poetry Now, Sacramento's Literary REVIEW & CALENDAR, is published each month by the Sacramento Poetry Center and is funded, in part, with grants from the California Arts Council and the Sacramento Cultural Arts Awards Program of the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission with support from the city and county of Sacramento.

Submissions of poems, artwork, and other works of interest to the Sacramento poetry community are welcome. See submission guidelines on page 10.

Poetry Now is distributed free in area bookshops, coffeehouses, community centers, colleges, etc. Back issues are available for \$3 each. Your membership gets **Poetry Now**, **Tule Review**, and **Rivers** delivered to your door or box.

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Editorial Staff: **Jody Ansell, Ann Conradsen, Tom Goff, Barbara Link, Pat Osfeld, and Ramona Soto**



The Sacramento Poetry Center is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets—including publications and reading series—and bringing to Sacramento the finest poetry we can get our hands on. Our offices are at 1631 K St. in the Sacramento Ballet Co. Bldg. Our phone number is: (916) 441-7395.

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President's Message

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a joyous holiday season. Our 25th year at SPC was packed full of great events, readings and workshops. We participated in the Flor y Canto Festival and produced a CD from the event; had 25th Anniversary readings; celebrated Sacramento Poetry Day on the Capitol steps; and collaborated with other organizations for fundraising events. SPC was also one of 154 organizations in the entire state to receive funding from the California Arts Council after the extreme funding cuts they endured last year. Our 25th year was very productive and next year SPC will strive to make things even better.

SPC Benefit

I want to thank everyone who came out to the SPC benefit or sent in a donation. Your support for the Sacramento Poetry Center is appreciated. I will have more information about the benefit in the February message.

Thanks again to everyone who has helped and supported SPC. We could not stay alive without your support.

Sacramento Poet Laureate

The Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission (SMAC) is taking applications for nominations of the Poet Laureate. Information is posted on our website and also on the SMAC website. Applications/Nominations are due in early February, so get the application together and nominate your candidate. SPC will also have application packets at our office if you would like to pick one up there. You can usually find someone at the SPC office on Monday evenings before and after our readings.

Poetry Needed for "Open Circle" Art Project

Les Birlerson is requesting poetry for his public art project that has been funded by the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission. The "Open Circle" project will consist of a large scale granite and glass sculpture. Selected poetry will be etched on the glass. Poetry will be judged according to its relevance to the theme of tolerance and inclusion. The project has funding to pay poets \$250 for selected works. The project concept and submission guidelines are listed on page 3 and will be posted on the SPC website; call (916) 441-7395 for more information.

—Martin

Search for 2005-2007 Poet Laureate

The Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission is pleased to announce the search for Sacramento's 2005-07 Poet Laureate. The selection process is based on nominations from the community. Individuals are invited to help in the search by nominating a Sacramento County poet who has produced and published significant work and has the ability to share the literary arts with the community.

With the assistance of the Poet Laureate Committee, the nominee will organize and lead one or more projects that promote awareness and enjoyment of poetry for the people of Sacramento. The Poet Laureate must also be available to the public for readings and talks throughout the community. The selected candidate will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$5,000 for the two-year term.

In order to be eligible, a nominee must be at least 25 years of age and a Sacramento County resident for at least the past five years. From the nominations received, the Poet Laureate Committee will select and forward up to five commendable manuscripts to the Grants & Cultural Programs Committee. That Committee will make their recommendation to the Commission, which approves the Poet Laureate selection.

Guidelines and entry forms will be available at the Arts Commission, 2030 Del Paso Blvd., Sacramento, 95815 or on our web site at www.sacculture.com, beginning December 3, 2004. The nomination deadline is Thursday, February 4, 2005, by 5:00 pm.

Nominees will be notified of the selection in March 2005. A formal inauguration and reception will be held in April 2005, during National Poetry Month. Former Poets Laureate Jose Montoya, Dennis Schmitz and Viola Weinberg will be in attendance.

The Poet Laureate Program is designed to encourage literary awareness in the Sacramento community. For more information, contact the Arts Commission at (916) 566-3992.



Call for Poetry: "Open Circle"
Public Art Commission
Les Birleson

The Sacramento Metropolitan Arts-funded public art commission project "Open Circle" by Les Birleson will include a large scale granite and glass "poetry circle." The poetry circle consists of 8 large glass tablets on which poetry will be etched. The panels are 30" x 38". The piece will be located at the Water Treatment Plant on Riverside Drive, near 11th. Poetry will be judged in accordance with its relevance to the theme of tolerance and inclusion. A stipend of \$250.00 will be paid to selected poets.

Concept:

The circle has been used for healing and centering of the human condition throughout history and across all cultures. It manifests in a multitude of ritual, symbolic and literal ways suggesting completeness, protection, and balance. The overlapping circles suggest commonalities, thought and interactions between people. Concentric circles suggest the movement and spread of thoughts and ideas outward from a source. The circle signifies unity in multiplicity, and by association, embracing diversity and inclusion of all peoples. Poets should feel free to submit works relating to any themes related to tolerance, inclusion, and healing.

Guidelines for Submissions:

1. The competition is open to residents of the greater Sacramento area.
2. There is no age limit.
3. Poems may not exceed 26 lines.
4. Each poem must be given a title.
5. Poems must be in typescript.
(No e-mail submissions will be accepted.)
6. Each poet may submit up to two poems that have not been previously published.
7. Poems must be submitted in duplicate, with a cover note listing the author's name, address and phone number, and the title of the poem. Names should not be on the poems themselves.
8. Poems must be the original work of the author.
9. The authors of selected poems will grant the Artist and the City of Sacramento permission to publish the poems in any related materials, in relation to the project.
10. Poems must be received by February 15, 2005.

Mail all entries to:
Open Circle Poetry
P.O. Box 314
Robbins, CA 95676

**Would you like to carry Poetry Now in your
business and help spread poetry throughout
the Sacramento area and beyond?
For details, contact us at:
poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org.**

*

Step by step my heart goes on
opens both these eggs, one
no feathers yet but I'm the one
whose hands keep circling down
whose plate has blood on it.

It's not easy, the pan
has no lid and the smoke
—you try! comes in gusts

and though you close the door slowly
twins are born
can be heard in this small coffin
sifted all morning, every morning

for birds, falling petals :small cries
and I go on alone, lost
in a sky broken apart

by an egg one twin offers the other
warmed the way you gather flowers
whose roots are left underground

—from a doorway
bringing me the small breeze
the small wings.

—Simon Perchik

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Poetry Now?
For \$25 you can get a 3X5
space to showcase your store,
event, book release, etc.**

**contact us at:
poetrynow@
sacramentopoetrycenter.org**

Literary Calendar for January 2005

Note: Unless otherwise stated, events take place in Sacramento, CA.

1 Saturday

First Saturday Series. TBA. Noah Hayes hosts, 8pm Theatre on the Boulevard, 1901 Del Paso Blvd. Open mic after. Info: Supanova09@hotmail.com or Sac_Town_Poetry@hotmail.com. \$5 donation.

2 Sunday

PoetSpirits, TBA, 6:00 pm, Sacramento Unitarian Church, 2425 Sierra Blvd., Rms 7/8. Info: Tom Goff, Nora Staklis, 481-3312; JoAnn Anglin at 451-1372.

3 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **A.P. Sullivan** and **Nora Laila Taklis**, host: Bob Stanley. 7:30 pm, Sacramento Ballet, 1631 K St. Info: 441-7395 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

4 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

Terry Moore's Access Television Show, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 9 pm, Channel 17 (depending on cable provider). Co-hosted by Regina High. (Sacramento viewing only.)

5 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Finger Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

6 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

7 Friday

Escritores del Nuevo Sol presents **Be Herrera and Friends**. 7:30 pm, La Raza Galeria Posada, 15th & R.

Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or Joannpen@comcast.net.

8 Saturday

Poems-For-All, **Arturo Mantecon**, hosted by Richard Hansen, 7:30 pm, The Book Collector, 1008 24th Street. Refreshments. Free mini-books. Info: Richard, 442-9295.

Escritores del Nuevo Sol's writing workshop and potluck. 11am, second floor at La Raza Galeria Posada, 15th & R. Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net.

9 Sunday

Stockton Poet's Corner: **Joe Tetro**. 7 pm, Barnes & Noble, Weberstown Mall, Stockton. Info, www.poetscornerpress.com or 209-951-7014.

10 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Heather Hutcheson**, host: Bob Stanley. 7:30 pm, Sacramento Ballet, 1631 K St. Info: 441-7395 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

BookTown, a bi-weekly radio show spotlighting the literary scene, co-hosted by Molly Fisk and Eric Tomb, 1-2 pm, KVMR 89.5 FM.

11 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

12 Wednesday

Rattlesnake Press: features **Shawn Pittard**, host, Kathy Kieth, The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., 7:30pm, to celebrate the release of his new chapbook, *These Rivers*, from Rattlesnake Press. Free. Read around follows.

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Finger Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

13 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

15 Saturday

Capital City Artists Collective's 3rd Saturday Workshop, poetry, live music, open-mic, 7-10 pm, 4320 Stockton Blvd. Info, Terry Guilford, 457-0831 or Sha-Lo, 348-4005. Refreshments. \$5 cover, kids free.

16 Sunday

Third Sunday Writing Group 1:00-3:00 pm, various locations. Info: eskimopi@jps.net or nancy_wallace@calpers.ca.gov.

17 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center presents a celebration of the legacy of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Stan Zumbiel hosts. 7:30 pm, Sacramento Ballet, 1631 K St. Info: 441-7395 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org.

18 Tuesday

Third Tuesday Poetry Series **Bill Gainer**, **Todd Cirillo** and **Will Staple**. Host: Kimberly White. Q&A follows reading. 7 pm at Arden-Dimick Library, 891 Watt (Watt & Northrup). Info: 264-2770. Free.

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

Terry Moore's Access Television Show, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 9 pm, Channel 17 (depending on cable provider). Co-hosted by Regina High. (Sacramento viewing only.)

Calendar continued...

Note: Unless otherwise stated, events take place in Sacramento, CA.

19 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info, culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Finger Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

20 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, Los Escritos del Sol. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

21 Friday

The Other Voice: Carol Frith and Joyce Odam, 7:30 pm, Davis Unitarian Church library, 27074 Patwin Road. Info: Allegra, 530-753-2634 or Betty, 530-753-1432.

24 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center: Gayiel von Geldern. Rhony Bhopla hosts. 7:30 pm, Sacramento Ballet, 1631 K St.. Info: 441-7395 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

BookTown, a bi-weekly radio show spotlighting the literary scene, co-hosted by Molly Fisk and Eric Tomb, 1-2 pm, KVMR 89.5 FM.

25 Tuesday

SPC Poetry Workshop, 7:30 pm, Hart Senior Center, 916 27th St. Info: Danyen, 530-756-6228. Free.

26 Wednesday

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5 pm, KDVS-90.3 FM. Info: culturelover.com.

Mahogany Urban Poetry Series, 9:00 pm, Sweet Finger Jamaican Restaurant, 1704 Broadway. Info: www.malikspeaks.com or 492-9336. \$5 cover.

27 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged, TBA. Open mic before/after. 8 pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th St. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

28 Friday

Poetry at the Art Foundry: Jeff Knorr & Lynne Chien, host, Luke Breit, 7:30 pm, Art Foundry Gallery, 1021 R. Street. Info: Luke, 446-POET. \$5 donation.

29 Saturday

The Show, featuring TBA. 7-9 pm The Guild Theater, 2828 35th St. Tickets, \$7 Underground Books or fromtheheart1@hotmail.com. Info: Terry Moore, 455-POET.

31 Monday

The Sacramento Poetry Center: open mic. Tracy Gourdine hosts. 7:30 pm, Sacramento Ballet, 1631 K St. Info: 441-7395 or www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org. Free.

What You Might Have Missed:

Katy Brown and Ashley Redfield read to a packed house at Kathy Kieth's November 10th Rattlesnake Reading. The audience overflowed onto the sidewalk in front of Richard and Rachel Hansen's Book Collector (1008 24th St., Sacramento) to hear Katy and Ashley introduce their brand-new chapbooks, just out from the SnakeRings Spiral-Chap Series, a project of Rattlesnake Press. Ashley, an impressively talented 13-year-old poet from Esparto, read with humor and aplomb from her collection, *The Heart of a Poet*. Katy Brown, an award-winning poet and an excellent photographer, read memorably from her book, *The Quality of Light*, a series of Brown's beautifully reproduced and luminous photographs, coupled with her equally luminous and lyrical poems. Rattle Readings are always a pleasure to attend. Kathy Kieth is a lively and gracious host, and The Book Collector provides a warm and welcoming environment for poets. —Carol Frith

Poetry and Cassanova were just two of the highlights of the SPC Reading and Benefit held on December 2 at the beautiful East Sacramento home of Burnett and Mimi Miller. In addition to the Millers' hospitality, the great food, and the chance to see old (and new) friends, the evening featured wonderful readings by Julia Levine and Kathleen Lynch, and the smooth sounds and tight harmonies of the ARC Jazz Ensemble—which included SPC Board Member Bob Stanley skillfully holding his own on bass! (Casanova, by the way, is a majestic blue-and-gold macaw...)—Kathy Kieth

Brix & Pix set the stage for the Rent Girl Event on Saturday, December 4, when Michelle Tea and Laurenn McCubbin premiered their graphic novel, *Rent Girl*. Hosted by Becca Costello and Frank Andrick, and funded by a grant from Poets & Writers, the spacious Brickhouse Gallery was alive with color—paintings covered the brick walls and a constant stream of slides fed the eye while readers Barbara Noble, Frank Andrick (accompanied by Chad Williams on guitar), Gene Bloom, Ruebi Freyja (and her banjo), Julie Reyes, Michelle Tea (with Laurenn McCubbin on slides) filled the packed, receptive house with their hot, hot poetry on a very cold winter night. Richard Hansen handed out *Poems-For-All* books of all the poets. Free food and wine was provided by Becca Costello and Alan Satow for all to partake. An amazing four hours of poetry, prose, music and art! —Kathy Kieth & RMG

List Your Event:

To have an event listed on the SPC Literary Calendar, please call Jody Ansell at: (916) 739-0768 or email us at: calendar@sacramentopoetrycenter.org by the 5th of the month preceding your event. Thank you.

Paperwork

is disempowerment, resignation,
my father teaching me
to be like him, meticulous,
small, unhappy,
is his fear of authority,
is how we get ahead
by sucking up to government,
taxpaying, finepaying,
insurancepaying, duespaying,
budgeting, submitting,
is filling out
forms, applications,
rebates, claims,
contracts, appeals,
documenting credit,
checkwriting, producing
notices, notes,
homework, exams,
recommendations, complaints,
diagrams of what malfunctioned,
spun beyond control,
resumes, miscellaneous,
detailed lies, depositions,
special pleadings, ass-
coverings, informed consents,
libels and counterlibels,
accusations, confessions,
retractions, disclaimers,
inventories, manifests,
statistics, catalogues,
Christmas card lists,
health reports, codicils,
notarized signatures, death
certificates, probate records,
is all in a day's work,
is duty, responsibility,
is being a grownup,
is the meaning of life
fear fear fear
and better luck next time.

—Paul Watsky

Joseph Drogos was born and raised on the south side of Chicago and later attended Georgetown University and, for an amusing and filthy time, Charles University in Prague. After emerging unscathed, he went to work for *The Regional News*, an independent newsweekly in Palos Heights, IL. He received a several Northern Illinois Newspaper Awards during his year there. He's also lived in Phoenix where he taught English and Latin at Brophy College Preparatory, a Jesuit secondary school. He recently moved to Sacramento, where he is a victim of President Bush's reviving economy and is currently looking for work.

Mountain Market's Morning Music (Highway 89 in the Sierras)

From two cob-webbed speakers hung above the
Fiji apples, mushrooms and baby carrot fingers
nestled in wooden bins, the raspy voice
of a cowboy bawls "I'll be missing you..."

She plunks down a Klondike ice cream bar
on the checkout counter. Wearing dark
glasses, a young mother (she's a regular)
rummages through old gas receipts, bills,

Credit and phone cards, pulls from her purse
two one-dollar food stamps, slapping them
down, without looking, then flips
to the last page in her blue checkbook.

Her parched "Don't mess with me" voice says,
"I'll write a check for a pack of
Marlboro Lights." A fidgety little
girl's little fingers grip the counter edge

In front of her cranky mother. Teeny-weeny
fingernails, painted clunky lime-green,
glow in the early morning light. The woman
suddenly takes off her dark glasses;

Embarrassed, she looks up through a film
of tears: "I've given up listening
to country western music!" she says,
slipping the dark glasses back on.

There on the counter, the Klondike ice cream
bar has begun to melt, a little.

—Robert Abplanalp

Slip Not

Audiociously caring [k]not[ted]

for anyone outside our aweltogether
insta/in(c)t

we bayed, prayed simulacraniously
enw(r)apt
in,
ex,
yesss....

—Joseph Drogos

Pearl Stein Selinsky



was raised and educated in New York, continuing her education in California. After she retired from teaching in the Los Angeles School District, she moved to Sacramento (with her husband, Victor) where she earned her Master's Degree in Creative Writing at the California State University, Sacramento. While there, she won first place in both the Bazzanella and Room Of One's Own competitions sponsored by the English Department. In addition, she has won a number of prizes in poetry competitions and has served as a judge in poetry competitions as well. Her work has appeared in *Vintage 45*, in anthologies entitled *Only In Her Shoes*, *To Honor A Teacher*, and *The Sacramento Anthology: One Hundred Poems*. Her poems have also been published in *Poetry* (Chicago), *Ekphrasis*, *Poetry Now*, *Poet's Guild*, *Zambomba*, *33 Review*, *The Prairie Star*, *Nostalgia*, *Mediphors*, *P.D. Q.*, *CQ*, and *Tule Review* among others.

Her book, entitled *Love and Other Complaints*, illustrated by her husband Victor, will be appearing in December from Rattlesnake Press. She will be reading at The Book Collector on February 9.

WITH THIS FRUIT....

"all harmony among human beings is the happy fruit of an error."
—Paul Valéry, *On Speaking Verse*

Come quickly then. Bite.
Let the juices run down
lips and chin...envelop us
as you
kiss me insensible,
the sweetness of that pulp
ingested and digested
before corruptive reason
interrupts this ripe felicity.

WINE DREAMS

O, glorious—
We had our nightly glass,
bottle tilted, emptied
nor any drop remains...
We toasted, each to each,
supped and sipped,
eye meeting eye...
reached hand to hand,
touched
and led ourselves
to bed
and there we slipped
into the deep
wine-tinted dreams,
warm glow
like sunsets poured
upon our pillowed heads.

**Now at Rattlesnake Press—
SnakeRings SpiralChaps #2 & #3**

Katy Brown: The Quality of Light

**Pearl Stein Selinsky & Victor Selinsky:
Love and Other Complaints**
☠☠☠

February Deadlines: Feb. 1: Snakelets (Poetry for Kids) Feb. 15: rattlesnake review #5	Snake Books are available at The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., Sacramento
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www.poetscornerpress.com

Chapbook Poetry Contest
Judge: Dennis Schmitz author of seven books
including *The Truth Squad* by Copper Canyon Press

First Place Award of \$500.00
winner will be announced by June 1, 2005
send manuscript of 24 to 30 text pages of poetry

with \$15.00 reading fee to
Poet's Corner Press
8049 Thornton Rd.
Stockton CA 95209

Deadline for submission: March 1, 2005
www.poetscornerpress.com

Villa

In my village, reporting vision,
verifying drives, seeking discovery,
enthusiasm, it is crucial to us
to assure some last influx of enjoyment.

Memories of events promise hideous
fraternities coming inout of our beds
in dreaming from opposite directions.

In my village, the grab you,
ask your papers, find misspellings.
Zip. They hang you right up.
Or they shoot you right away.

You think, or you are.
It is a palm tree and fir that dream
in each other. Carrion-eaters
come from swamps in your foaming head.
They furrow in your head,
scavenging like Eohippus. (It
is the first horse; looks like a pig.)

They don't care what you say.
If you want life you will jump,
you will chew rags, you will "moo"
when they tell you. You
will tunnel like a mole.

* * * * *

We were left alone. We are alone.
Wanting a single star, maybe
liberty of anonymity or blowing
wind in grass, we seek a moon
to explore a road. Look up in the sky.
We don't see what we see.
Think stone. But we don't know "stone."
Stone. What is it? Is it marble,
slate? If it is hard, is that stone?
Are tiles or peachpits stone?
Lime, brown, blue, sand stones
are stone. Hard, and they crumble.

It is tales of halted need that flower
from broken hope. When it is hard,
I know it. Like onyx, beautiful, hard.

Or granite full of black spots in grey.
I want to lick alabaster.

In my village, we had religion
carved into devils, angels; saints
chipped from mahogany, stitched
into tapestry, beaten in leather.

Or legends frescoed onto walls;
engravings, casts, painted plasters,
papers, parchments: someone
holds a dandelion, or speaks to birds,
or points a staff. We had to pray.
Lot of years ago we had to vote.

I tell you this who think acorn,
fern grow just for you.
Not even skunk cabbage.
There were no hours to live together.

* * * * *

We couldn't swim, slopped the cat's water.
Voted both machines on mannequin day.
They got vicious, threw us up.
We got buried like potatoes.

You get content with what remains.
But someday, someday you think
we will change to sparrows, start singing.
But this is holy filth.

Straight or bent, the tree decides
to survive any old parade.

* * * * *

In our village, beat back to our vomit
reverie resolves the yellow lily
with the muck. We speak brave truths,
sink back, sing for the self alone.

We take a second skin, hear bonfires
of brothers, cloud-daggers that take
hunger foot after foot— and are
familiar things: we try to bring some

meaning back from memory of the hunt.

In this village, the shy, damp sculptor
seeks the missing arm. We take our fun
in corners. There's no lasting magic.
Time for crossing is unfaithful,
resolute—like the word of youth
bulging in his pants vowing to end
the strawberry tax. All is scheduled
for a standard slot. In my village.

—Edward Mycue

harbor light

the harbor no longer
has a lighthouse

and the moon slumbers
behind fog

Pico the old
Portuguese fisherman
snuffs out
a fence post fire with sand
then walks
along the surf waters

he is dreaming of nets
out like wings
from some great bird
sinking below
the flesh of dusk

he prefers the harbor
dark like this
drifting
in the charred
smell of light

—Michael Spring

existential cafe

this time I take the window seat
my back to the darkwood darkness

torn wings of light scar my hand
as I sip the black bleed
of Brazilian coffee beans

today I will not study the abstract faces
and gestures in conversation

it's the elm I follow instead
rising from the sidewalk
like Lester Young's solo

floating from the cafe speakers
and fogging the din of voices
and ceramic clatter

I sit like Billie Holiday
dreaming inside the sinuous sound
of a saxophone

the branches of the elm
flood the sky

—Michael Spring

the fado guitar

twelve strings
from the roots

of anguish
stir the ocean

making a nest
for the moon

—Michael Spring

Michael Spring currently lives in rural Oregon where he is building a cob house and working on his second book: *Mud Song*. His poems have previously appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Paris/Atlantic*, *The Pedestal*, *Tule Review*, and others. His first book of poems, *Blue Crow*, was published by Lit Pot Press, Inc.

Shawn Pittard, *These Rivers*, Rattlesnake Press, Fair Oaks, CA, 2004
Reviewed by James DenBoer

"In a world of achievement, I have no fish," Shawn Pittard writes; but as a poet he lives in a better, more real world, and what he has caught in his new chapbook, *These Rivers*, are kinds of success better than the merely material: here is sympathy with and entrance to the wild (especially as it impinges on the urban), an uncynical acknowledgement of the importance of family (grandfather, mother, wife) and the social (an important passerby, his neighbors, a roster of the dead), and an ability to frame the interaction between the natural and the social in poems of quiet assurance.

In that world, Shawn Pittard has caught many a fish; in *These Rivers* he has many achievements. The fifteen poems in his chapbook from Rattlesnake Press (Kathy Kieth's generous and increasingly impressive new series) prove that Shawn has listened deep within himself, has read and learned from companionable poets, and has found a voice that is calm and confident -- no experimental hijinks, no fashionable, sweaty wrestling with "language," no in-your-face shock for shock's sake. Instead, Pittard asks us to look at the world as "The Gift" (as one poem is titled), for which we must "try to remember the words . . ."

The poet's rivers -- the great rivers of human emotion and existence -- bear salmon roe "like manna" to our starvation; they have "new currents [which] hold us"; he prays that the river "bear his sins away . . . down to the sea." His fellows on the earth, human and nonhuman alike, suffer real loss -- the salmon on Nimbus Hatchery's killing tables, the egret by poacher's pistol, a fisherman drowned -- yet they are also blessed, by crimson blossoms on a city pavement, sweet smoke from an old pipe, strutting robins in a cemetery. In the end, the poet achieves a spiritual goal: "I feel pleasantly invisible," he says, anchored securely in the flow (in this particular poem, "East Lawn," the flow is overtly that of history, from stone-carved past to the present of tonight's owl hoot).

Raised in Arizona, among cholla, desert wrens and saguaros, Shawn Pittard contrasts and celebrates his life as a man who lives now, in Sacramento, with salmon and steelhead, egrets and owls, redwoods and daffodils -- his poems the marks of his journey, a moving forward, as rivers do, feeling the tidal pull of the great sea of transcendence. Graced with a small drawing by Fred Dalkey of a lone fisherman, and nicely printed with gray tulle fog covers, *These Rivers* is a fine beginning for Shawn Pittard.

The Cheap Motel

What a ruckus from just outside
my door. The motel pool,
chlorinated cool & full

of happy screaming children
all belonging, it seems,
to the room next to mine

where I arrived after so
long solitary
driving sweaty tense

in the shoulder blades,
ready to scrub the day
& sleep the single bed.

Except for that ruckus
from the unguarded
pool, so many breakable

children. How can a family
create so many butterfly
arms wrists fingers?

So loud laughing splashing
cool & happy outside
my window cracked like

half a smile
between shut & open.

— Taylor Graham

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Recently Released:

1. *Bliss Volume 1* ed. Rhony Bhopla
2. *The Nambuli Papers* by Greg Boyd. "Boyd writes with a sardonic black humor that alternately fascinates and repels." — *The Los Angeles Times*
3. *California Poetry from the Gold Rush to the Present* ed. Dana Gioia, Chrissy Yost, & Jack Hicks
4. *Tidewriters: The Lost Reel* by Greg Boyd
5. *The Quality of Light* by Katy Brown
6. *Hell's Anonymity* by Jack Cavanaugh Jr.
7. *Love Letters to God* by Ruebi Freyja
8. *Living With Myth* by Taylor Graham
9. *littlesnake broadside #8* by Robert Grossklaus, from Rattlesnake Press (free at The Book Collector or at readings around town)
10. *The Tenderness House* by Dianna Henning
11. *Skin Tax* by Tim Z. Hernandez
12. *Urban Savage and Other Poems* by G.B. Herron
13. *Art In Heaven* by David Humphreys. "The ambition and intensity of the collection, where serenity or passion are constant, are qualities that will stay with the reader after the book is closed..."—Tom Goff
14. *After Modigliani* by Stephen Kessler
15. *Tell it to the Rabbis and Other Poems 1977-2000* by Stephen Kessler
16. *Keeping Time in the Clock Shop* by Kathy Kieth
17. *Rattlesnake Review #3 & #4* ed. Kathy Kieth
18. *A Sense of Melancholy* by Joyce Odam
19. *Brevities #20 & #21* ed. Joyce Odam; a monthly anthology of minimanlist poetry.
20. *These Rivers* by Shawn Pittard
21. *The Bitter Suite* by Robert Roden
22. *The Silt Reader #5 & #6* ed. Robert Roden and Barton M. Saunders
23. *Love and Other Complaints* by Pearl Stein Selinsky & Victor Selinsky. "Shrewd and playful"—Dennis Schmitz, former Poet Laureate of Sacramento
24. *The River Speaks* by Nora Laila Staklis. "This collection of deliciously textured words appeals to all the senses." —JoAnn Anglin; (see review on page 10).
25. *Collected Poems* by C. J. Stevens
26. *Islands of Earshot* by A. P. Sullivan. "An invigorating mind-ride—Sullivan's poems are headlong but nimble. They startle, they enthrall with word-play, they go deep."—Dennis Schmitz
27. *On Tuesday, When the Homeless Disappeared* by Marcos McPeck Villatoro

Why the Reading Didn't Happen

You brought a brand-new ode about the simple life—about pine trees and the silence one hears between breezes.

But right up front clustered about seven kids and two women dressed in gray, and a dark-gray man (someone whispered Amish, maybe Mennonite)

and the TV in the corner that's always muted

was turned up, not real loud but just enough, so the kids leaned forward as far as they could without falling and the gray women and the dark-gray man

(I guess they'd never seen TV before, the way they sipped their beverages softly, so as not to miss a word) rapt in the televised news and the commercials.

And so we sipped our whispers and went back home without reading a single poem about the simple life.

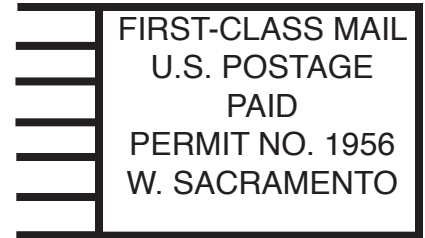
—Taylor Graham

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Charcoal, Sketch

Circling,
 gliding
 diving,
 homing,
 in the sky
 all birds are black.

—Phillip A. Waterhouse

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