



California State Poetry Society

Post Office Box 7126, Orange, California 92863

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CSPS Poetry Letter

Dear CSPS Members and other Poets and Friends of Poetry,

Please help me in welcoming our last 40th Anniversary ***California Quarterly*** issue! As we all hibernate to gather forces for the coming year, you might well come up with a poem that you would like to submit to our box. Besides, in the new year there are the Monthly Contests for which to gear up, as well as the big Annual Contest later on in the spring, the deadline of which is usually June 30th. Also, do not forget your poor brother, poetry – as Francis of Assisi would say – in your donations. But have no fear, Francis made a vow of poverty and so, apparently, has poetry in our society. Or at the very least, as some say, poetry is of another economic order – the economy of the gift.

In the past months, while we wait for a proper CSPS web site, we have been experimenting with a Facebook group that we called (what else) California State Poetry Society. Poets from many countries publish their texts, while others comment and translate. It's an open group, so I invite you to participate. If you have a problem with the site, please let me know, as I'm "managing" it!

Happy holidays and a creative, inspiring New Year – and with good writing, of course – from

Your ***Poetry Letter*** editor,

Margaret

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As our first poem, here is one by Timothy Russell:

IN YOSHINO

The pea size cherries are as big
as they will ever get and half as many
as last year thanks to the late frost
thanks to global warming or maybe
thanks to the holocaust of honey bees

and the tent worms or whatever
they are inhabit their geometric camp
although they are still just black specks
and the early bird robin hops once twice
the way they do and peers sideways as if
she can see straight through the planet
jabs and of course gets the worm gobbles
it whole hops once twice and I swear
celebrates with a little staccato something
you'd think more likely to come out
of Woody Woodpecker depending on
your age and probably national affiliation
for all I know but anyway different
from the usual chirp

and the morning
is a little on the cool side especially
in the shade of the tree but the sun
I know just coming over the ridge
along the top of the plastic rattan chair
radiates through both my thin shirts
onto the scarred desert plain that is
the back I've never seen just when
a runner in a black top and black shorts
like some rebellious daughter of
the Grim Reaper passes by and waves

Timothy Russell, Toronto, Ohio
CSPS 2014 Annual Contest –
Honorable Mention

Next, Katharyn Howd Machan's poem fits very well into the current tide of gene testing.

BROWN

My body, Central European wrought,
with aid from whitest Germany and old
dear England (France a second thought)
needs sun and sun and sun against the cold
that goes along with living in New York.
My genes may call for teapots and pâté
and heavy dill-rich gravy on roast pork,
but all I really need to feed my day
is one tall lemonade with lots of ice
and maybe a papaya's honeyed heat
served out in juicy chunks or golden slice.
Give me an island far from winter's street!
Along a palm-lined beach I take my chance,
full light's warm arms my partner in life's
dance.

*Katharyn Howd Machan, Ithaca,
New York*

CSPS August 2014 Monthly Contest –
1st Place



Our next poem is a villanelle from Ninette Freed:

CAST IRON MAIDEN

An obelisk of white that dominates
the sound, Biloxi Lighthouse stands alone
surviving hurricanes. Could it be fate?

First tower in the South with cast iron plates
it's weathered many stormy cones.
An obelisk of white that dominates

Biloxi's past and present opened gates
for women keepers—previously unknown.
Surviving hurricanes—could it be fate?

Its stance, at times not always straight
reflected surging sea's destructive moans.
An obelisk of white that dominates

the view, once painted black with coal tar's trait
(false-claimed to honor Lincoln's death)
condones
surviving hurricanes. Could it be fate?

The last one standing in Magnolia State
the Cast Iron Light House will not be outshone.
An obelisk of white that dominates
surviving hurricanes. Could it be fate?

Ninette Freed, Palm Desert, California
CSPS May 2014 Monthly Contest –
2nd Place

And since we are already knee-deep into
villanelles, I will take advantage of
serendipitously receiving another one from Ruth
Adams. This poem is particularly timely these
days, with the usual villanelle repetitions
sounding like haunting echoes:

THE VILLANELLE OF THE GUN

Where are the children? Call their names.
Bid them come in from the deadly street.
They shall forsake childhood's pleasant games.

Where are the children? The night sky flames;
let them come flying on hurried feet.
Where are the children? Call their names.

It's Saturday night and The Law proclaims
for all the kiddies a "Special" treat.
They shall forsake childhood's pleasant games.

The gun bears no grudge nor cares where it
aims,
"Tag, you're out!" be you ever so fleet.
Where are the children? Call their names.

Run children, run! Dodge the bullet that
maims . . .
Death is a player you cannot cheat.
They shall forsake childhood's pleasant games.

Death's list at the goal grows long with his
claims,
Let us wrap them up in a winding
sheet . . .

Where are the children? Call their names.
They shall forsake childhood's pleasant games.

Ruth Adams, San Pedro, California
First published in 2013 in *Colere: A Journal of
Cultural Explorations* (Coe College, Iowa)



Our last poem is the republication of a poem by Paula Yup. It paints a vivid picture of mid-century “ethnic foods,” comfort foods, as they were shakily remembered by immigrants like Paula’s mother and then perceived and consumed by the daughter. The nearly perfect sushi-chef purity of today’s ethnic restaurants is of a totally different order, light years away, it seems:

MY MOTHER'S HOMESICKNESS

I don't think the five of us
ever figured her out
cashiering at Phoenix supermarkets
longing for fresh fish from Hong Kong
shark fin soup something she craved
but in my childhood
we had many kinds of foods
It was hamburgers
egg foo young
oxtail soup wonton soup
sweetbread fried chicken
french fries mashed potatoes
TV dinners of all kinds
not fresh fish
How she ate us
with her unhappiness
missing her home
Decades passed
before I got it
what my mother missed

Paula Yup, Spokane, Washington
First published in *Storyboard*

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