

CSPS  
Poetry Letter  
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Edited by Maja  
Trochimczyk

# Poetry Letter

California State Poetry Society



## ANNUAL CONTEST 2022 – WINNERS AND HONORARY MENTIONS

The three prize-winning poems from CSPS Annual Contest 2022 were published in the *California Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 4, guest-edited by Deborah P Kolodji. Since our print-only journal is not published online, I decided to copy the three winners and add some honorary mentions from the contest, so that their poetry has a wider reach. In *Newsbriefs* No. 4 published in that CQ, I listed the honored poems and cited the Judge's comments.

FIRST PRIZE: Jeanne Wagner – “Dolores Street”

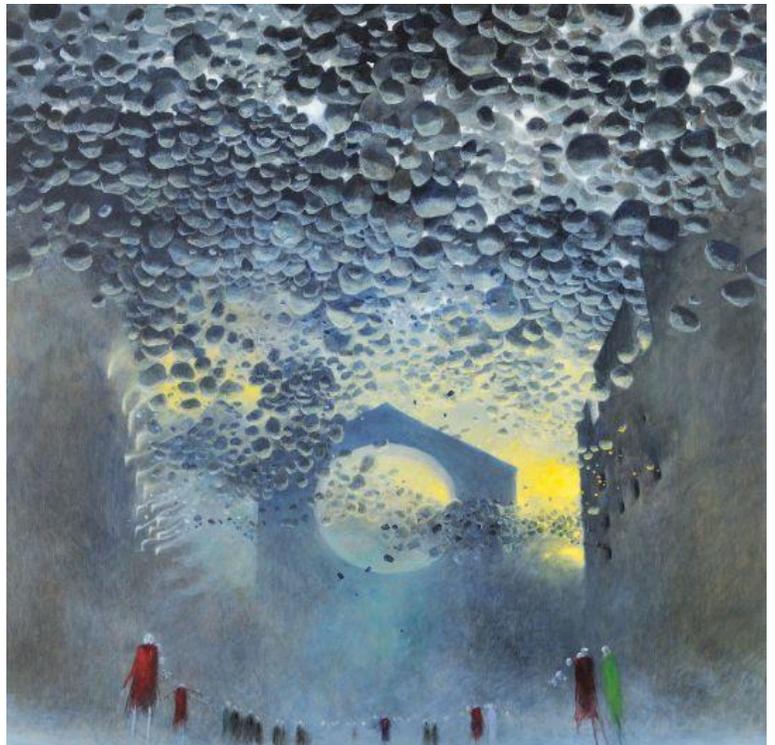
SECOND PRIZE: Susan Wolbarst – “After”

THIRD PRIZE: Claire Scott – “Ariadne Auf Naxos”

### HONORARY MENTIONS

1. Claire Scott – “S & H Green Stamps”
2. Claire Scott – “Motel Rooms of Last Resort”
3. Claire Scott – “The Sea Squirt Loses its Mind”
4. Susan Wolbarst – “Where's Ginny?”
5. Claire Scott – “In the Revised Version: A Different Mother”
6. Sunny Yim Alperson – “Husband's Urn”

JUDGE'S STATEMENT: “I am proud, honored and humbled to have been selected as the judge for the 2022 California State Poetry Society Annual Contest. The poems submitted reflected an amazing diversity of subjects and styles, and the caliber of the work submitted, overall, was outstanding. I congratulate all the Winners and Honorable Mentions, and thank and commend everyone who entered. I wish you all continuing success in your poetic endeavors.” ~Frank Iosue, 2022 Annual Contest Judge.



Zdzisław Beksiński, *Untitled*, 1980

Mr. Iosue also commented about the winners: “The mark of a truly outstanding poem is its capacity to elicit sensations, emotions and intuitive associations that grow richer and more inexhaustible every time it is read. To my mind, these three winning poems all share that quality.” He was also quite surprised that he awarded the third prize and as many as four out of six honorary mentions to the same poet, Claire Scott. The contest was judged anonymously and Mr. Iosue had no way of knowing that these poems were penned by one author; in fact, he selected them because they were so different from each other! On behalf of the CSPS, I'd like to express my gratitude for his insights, hard work and dedication. He reviewed over 120 poems, reading through anonymous submissions multiple times.

In addition to Annual Contest poets, this issue of *the Poetry Letter* features three poems from Les Bernstein's book *Loose Magic*. Among five books reviewed are: *Shadows Thrown* by Laura Ann Reed (Pauline Dutton), *Saffron Skies* by William Scott Galasso (Maja Trochimczyk), and Juliusz Erazm Bolek's *Ogród /The Garden* in Polish and English (Jan Stępień), with two sample poems translated by Anna Maria Mickiewicz & Steve Rushton.

Two book reviews are by Michael Escoubas, shared from *Quill & Parchment: Synergy* by Kathy Lohrum Cotton & Michael Scott, M.D. and *Alice's Adventures: A Modern Version of Lewis Carroll's Classic in Verse* by Paul Buchheit.

The illustrations come from surrealist paintings by Zdzisław Beksiński (1929-2005) - one of the most famous contemporary artists. His nightmare imagery of dark dreamscapes reveals a fascination with death and destruction. A famous film director Guillermo del Toro described Beksiński's work as follows: "In the medieval tradition, Beksiński seems to believe art to be a forewarning about the fragility of the flesh – whatever pleasures we know are doomed to perish – thus, his paintings manage to evoke at once the process of decay and the ongoing struggle for life. They hold within them a secret poetry, stained with blood and rust." Beksiński's untitled paintings are open to interpretations by viewers and have been associated with visionary Romantic and surreal ideas, or with inspirations by Eastern mysticism. In 2001, the artist bequeathed his entire artistic output to the Historical Museum in Sanok, Poland where he was born. Currently, the Museum has the largest collection of his works in the world: several thousand paintings, reliefs, sculptures, drawings, prints, etc. Enjoy!

~ Maja Trochimczyk, CSPA President

### JUDGE'S COMMENTS

#### FIRST PRIZE: Jeanne Wagner – "Dolores Street"

Gorgeous! This is one of those poetic gems that grows more lovely and evocative with every re-reading. Minimalist, but rich, in detail...simple and concise in its execution...with a gently unfolding, unassuming grace and elegance of perception. A poem of organic beauty and subtle power, it is a delicate "emotional thumbnail" ...An unforgettable *chiaroscuro* snapshot in words of a fragile and haunting "psychic landscape." The exquisite imagery; the heartfelt connection to the aesthetic substance of the poem; its nuance and resonance... and the absolutely breathtaking final 3 lines!...To have infused and compressed so much subdued intensity, and transformational perception, with such concision and craft, into only 13 lines of poetry, is truly special and rare!...and makes this poem, for me, a minor masterwork. A truly exceptional poem, and very deserving of being the 1<sup>st</sup> prize winner. Congratulations on this wonderful work!

#### SECOND PRIZE: Susan Wolbarst – "After"

An absolutely beautiful and haunting poem...based on a true account of a failed suicide attempt...The power of the simple, direct emotional intensity, and the immediacy of the poetic occasion of this work, is truly moving and memorable. There is a bare-boned genuineness of feeling, and a palpable sensory immersion in the moment of circumstance, that is, at the same time, heartbreaking and uplifting. The lack of any stanza breaks, and the compositional decision to primarily use short, declarative sentences for the narrative structure of the poem, reinforce the feeling of a natural movement of "perception and response" to the unfolding of events, and all attendant realizations and emotions...and propel the poem forward, without any sense of disingenuous artifice or pretense. The strength of this poem is its understated lyricism. The almost angelic "innocence" of acknowledgment and redemption of the "I" of the poem, is utterly engaging and disarming ....It is reverent and sincere, and interspersed with the evocative resonance of little epiphanies...as evidenced in lines like these: "I feel you dive away and cold / fills the space where you were." A truly outstanding poem, and a worthy recipient of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize!...Bravo, and congratulations!

#### THIRD PRIZE: Claire Scott – "Ariadne Auf Naxos"

An engaging, edgy and notable re-imagining and retelling of the Theseus / Ariadne myth (inspired by, and titled after, the opera by Richard Strauss), from the perspective of the poem's narrator...Cretan princess, Ariadne. This poem is deftly executed and composed: taut, well-crafted, and darkly humorous with the exacting narrative authority and precision of detail; the management of the movement and unfolding of the poem; and the sardonic, "no holds barred" revelations and motivations of Ariadne's psyche; without excess, marvelously calibrated and cleverly exposed. The poem is also nicely structured, visually: the absence of almost any punctuation gives each line more aesthetic autonomy, and moves the poem down the page with an ease and naturalness that not only reflects the free-flow of normal speech, but also builds, line by line, the wittily-vindictive poetic, and rhetorical, "rebuttal" that is at the core of the poem's *raison d'être*...its "reason to be"! And, the four 8-line stanzas create a lovely, subtle symmetry that serves as a nuanced, understated scaffolding for, and counterpoint to, Ariadne's unapologetic, bullet point litany of indictments and justifications that form this memorable and satisfying "righteous monologue."

## **DOLORES STREET**

My grandmother always said  
she was lace-curtain Irish,  
like the curtains that hung in her house,  
made of dimity or lace,  
fussy as old-fashioned undergarments.  
The windows myopic with gauze.  
You could feel the night caught in their nets,  
hear the foghorn's muffled two-note  
blues as it sang to the ships  
as they sailed through the Gate.  
I wanted to tell her light  
is what darkness dreams of.  
Pull those curtains down and let it in.

*Jeanne Wagner, First Prize*

## **THE SEA SQUIRT LOSES ITS MIND**

It eats its own brain  
once attached headfirst to a rock  
where it will spend the rest of its brief life  
the brain no longer needed since  
it's never going to move again

I recently settled in Sunset Lodge  
last stop assisted living  
in Walnut Creek, California  
living a sessile existence  
in a miniscule apartment

On the windowless sixteenth floor  
never going anywhere again  
no trips to science museums  
wobbling on a walker  
no beach vacations  
dipping bunioned toes in salty brine

I sit in my chair all day  
roots burrowing into blind earth  
staring at wallpaper roses  
while neurons blink out like morning stars  
someone who looks like my daughter  
says try yoga or tai chi

But my body barely moves anymore  
my mind no longer scribbles memories  
living between world and not world  
yet I am alive, still alive inside my skin  
counting rows and rows of pink roses

*Claire Scott, Honorary Mention 3*

Fourteen people have survived suicidal jumps off the Golden Gate Bridge in the past 22 years. "Jump survivor Kevin Hines said he remembered landing in the water and that a creature kept him afloat. According to bystanders, it was a sea lion."

*--San Francisco Chronicle*

## **AFTER**

I didn't expect this.  
The water is very cold and I am here.  
I see sunshine and I am here.  
I taste salt and I am here.  
I hear the highway overhead  
on the orange bridge, thrumming.  
I can't turn my head to look.  
I bob on the waves, remembering  
the hard smack on the water. I will never  
forget how hard it felt, how loud in my ears.  
I expected that to be my last thought.  
But I am here because of you.  
I can't see you, but I know you're  
under me because I feel warmth and  
softness. You decided to keep me afloat  
so I can breathe. I'm not sure why you did this.  
I'm not sure I could keep upright by myself.  
I'm not sure I can tell you how much I love you.  
We have no shared language.  
I love you more than I've ever loved anyone  
or anything. I love everything here: the salt, the cold,  
the sunshine, the thrumming, the bobbing.  
But most especially, I love you.  
I am telling you that over and over in my thoughts.  
It all seems perfect to me now  
because I am here. And you are here with me.  
I hear a motor boat approaching  
and feel its wake moving me.  
I feel you dive away and cold  
fills the space where you were.  
Come back- I didn't thank you.  
I didn't finish letting you know  
how much I love you.  
Someone from the boat  
is yelling down to me, but  
I don't understand. I can't listen.  
Too much noise in my head.  
I only know that I am here.  
I only wish that I could  
swim away with you.

*Susan Wolbarst, Second Prize*

## ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

Why so many myths written by misogynists  
as usual they've got it all wrong  
I wasn't left behind on that island  
abandoned by a lover in a hurry to get home  
watching the wind, checking his sails  
maybe losing interest in me now that  
he killed the minotaur  
but I know he loved me, after all I saved his life

And I wanted to do it, to rescue girls and boys  
from the blood-fanged monster, my half-brother  
my mother's folly  
but my god! he was so full of himself after  
strutting and boasting  
holding high the horns of the bull as he raced  
his chariot around town, sloshing red wine,  
singing hymns of praise to himself

But I was the one who made it possible  
I was the one who gave him the thread  
who gave him the sword  
who told him how  
why would I want to sail off  
with that blowhard and live far  
from buzzing cities and breathtaking beaches  
I hid high up in the hills

Hearing my name called over and over  
echoing across the rocks  
until his words were lost in a rush of wind  
and I watched the black sails rise  
singing softly as he vanished into the mist  
waiting for Dionysus  
the god I seduced  
so I too could be immortal

*Claire Scott, Third Prize*

## IN THE REVISED VERSION: A DIFFERENT MOTHER

Mother, the light is leaking  
the clock hands exhausted  
can you hear me?  
(you who couldn't hear my uncle's hands)  
I went to your grave last week  
row along the hedgerow  
I couldn't find you  
(you who floated in the haze of Seconal)  
I left the primroses you loved  
you know the purple ones  
I picked from your garden  
roots and all when I was two  
and you smiled when I gave them to you  
my face smeared with dirt ..  
(the hot tears of a hair brush)  
you taught me to walk with scissors  
behind my back  
(you took pills to forget)  
you showed me how to whip egg whites  
for angel food cake  
(what your brother did to you)  
you taught me to never wear white  
shoes after Labor Day  
can you hear me?  
one day you told me  
we were made of stardust .  
Mother, how did you know?  
(you who vegged on sitcoms and scotch)  
I am tired Mother  
soon I will take off my skin suit  
and return to the stars  
maybe some of your stardust  
will mix with mine  
can you hear me?  
(I swallow pills to forget)

*Claire Scott, Honorary Mention 5*

## S & H GREEN STAMPS

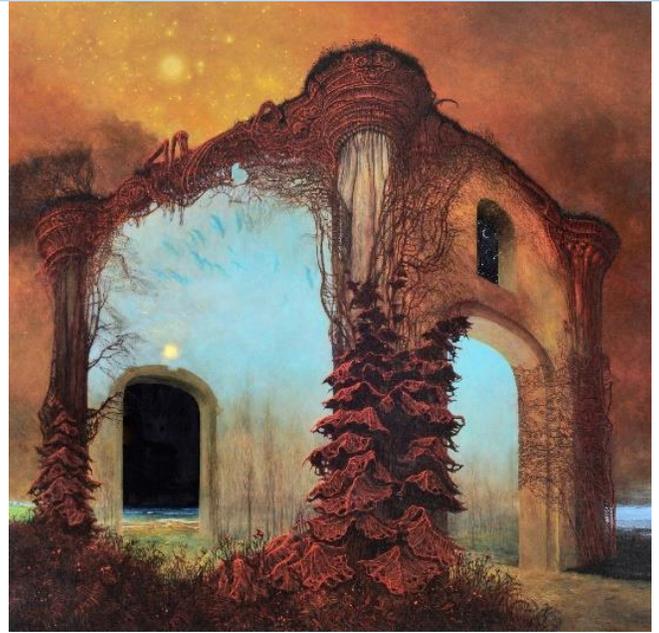
I loved the orderly procession  
of stamps stepping shoulder to shoulder  
across the page. I took the green stamps  
from my mother's purse when she came home  
from the A&P. She showed no interest, wobbled  
to her room slugging a bottle of Jim Beam, leaving  
groceries on the counter. Melting ice cream  
I spooned from the container.  
Shredded wheat I fed to the dog. I loved  
pulling the stamps apart, licking their little backs  
and pasting them into the pint-sized booklets.

## ABOUT THE FIVE-TIME WINNER

*Claire Scott won the Third Prize and 4 Honorary Mentions in 2022 CSPA Annual Contest. She is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of Waiting to be Called and Until I Couldn't.*

I couldn't wait to finish a few books and race to the store  
to pick out a prize: a set of six wine glasses, a Zippo lighter,  
a pink ashtray. It didn't matter. It seemed like magic.  
I wouldn't mind spending some time each day  
with familiar sheets of green stamps  
and a booklet picturing a cheery family of four.  
No alcohol in sight. No sharp objects or vials of pills.  
The comfort of always fifty squares on a page,  
never forty-nine or sixty-two.  
A meditative practice like the sand mandalas  
of Buddhist monks sending healing,  
peace and purification into this worn  
and weltered world. I could do that.  
And maybe I could trade some stamps  
for a Swank Key Ring with a nail clipper  
or a Bathtub Tray with a back scrubber.  
No credit card needed. Magic.

*Claire Scott, Honorary Mention 1*



*Zdzisław Beksiński, Untitled, 1978*

## **MOTEL ROOMS OF LAST RESORT**

skittering roaches   grimy sheets  
seeping toilet   Gideon Bible

freeway roar   big rigs grinding  
God stomping in his garden

a salesman slumps on the bed   thinking of thick trees   tall bridges  
his boss threatening   rent past due   throbbing tooth

a woman soaks in the tub   blood-blue bruises  
memories of night's littered promises

do they reach for the Bible looking for a late breaking cure  
*All things are possible with God. Mark 10:27*  
*For no word from God will ever fail. Luke. 1:37*

or snort a sure thing   slug scotch   space out in the blue haze of TV  
a break from dead ends   doomed choices

knowing they will return in the morning   or the next morning   or the next  
to a life of unquiet desperation   no miracles in sight

not seduced by the words of   a ghostly God-in- a-drawer  
not daring to hope for more

+

*Claire Scott, Honorary Mention 2*

## WHERE'S GINNY?

We always go to your favorite restaurant,  
always order the same thing, as if adhering

to the routine will somehow make things revert  
to how they used to be. We split a Reuben

sandwich and an order of sweet potato fries.  
I order a glass of wine for each of us - you white,

me red - and we eat in the sunshine on the patio.  
"We should take a boat trip down the Mississippi  
River,"

you say, not registering how impossible that would be.  
*That would be great,* I say, thinking

about you wandering around the boat all night  
in fuzzy slippers, slipping and falling overboard.

Thinking about logistics of travel with you  
in your current confusion gives me a headache.

*Have you read any good books lately?*  
I ask, wondering if you can still

decode words on a page.  
"I like this chardonnay," you say.

## [Where's Ginny? Continued]

You eat three bites of your sandwich as I  
wolf down my half and way too many fries.

You tear the rest into little pieces you intend  
to feed your dog when you get home.

*Eat your sandwich, Ginny.* But you're already  
packaging its pieces in your folded-up napkin,

stuffing it into your empty purse. You are skin  
and bones. *Would you like some dessert? I noticed*

*they have banana bread. Do you remember making  
it for our writers' group? No answer. Yours*

*was the best I've ever eaten. Do you like peanut butter?*  
No answer. *Would you like a peanut butter chocolate  
chip cookie?*

But you're done thinking about food.  
You smile, with a dreamy look passing

over your face that reminds me of the old you.  
"A boat trip down the Mississippi River," you repeat.

*Susan Wolbarst, Honorary Mention 4*

## HUSBAND'S URN

A Lovely  
Turquoise vase in the bookshelf that  
holds you. All of You.  
Three pounds of white-grey powder in a pretty container.  
Ocean squeezed into a bowl.  
Selfless master teacher from cradle to 73.  
You paid dues and completed your circle.  
Three aimless birds high up. Does destination matter?  
Sunshine over wingtips.  
Chest thrust wide open, never been so proud.  
Free to roam Himalaya to Machu Picchu, Atlantic to Yosemite.  
Back to the ancient flight with silent songs  
Of Spring mountains, of Winter moons,  
Star dust my evening skies.  
Glad you are not alone.

*Sunny Yim Alperson, Honorary Mention 6*



*Zdzisław Beksiński, Untitled, 1978*

## FEATURED POET – LES BERNSTEIN

Les Bernstein's poems have appeared in journals, presses and anthologies in the U.S.A. and internationally, Her chapbooks *Borderland*, *Naked Little Creatures* and *Amid the Din* have been published by Finishing Line Press. Les is a winner of the 6th annual Nazim Hikmet Festival. She also was a Pushcart Prize Nominee for 2015. Les has been the editor of *Redwood Writer's Anthologies* for the last five years and was also the editor of the *Marin High School Anthology 2018*. Her full length poetry book *Loose Magic* has been published by Finishing Line Press and is available on Amazon. Poems below are from the *Loose Magic* book.

### Yahrzeit

it is your birthday today  
I leave the windows open  
and watch the sunflowers  
turn to the sun

I remember the moment  
time slithered away  
that day unlike all others  
tangling into a hard knot

I will light a candle  
to chaperone my way  
to toggle between  
here and nowhere

it is spring again  
with its hopeful sky  
you inhabit the wind  
while terrestrial business  
continues  
as if nothing changed

*Yahrzeit is the anniversary of a death marked by burning a candle*

### EVERYDAY

every day in the middle distance  
I build my house  
the foundation yoked to plausibility  
a dreamscape yard

underneath a waking life  
a charmed unconcern  
makes sacred  
altars for ordinary life  
rooms built for forgetting

every day I build  
a structure from the roof down  
beams high  
a hint of dry rot

every day I build  
strange mysteries of small benedictions  
a story carved in bone  
no matter how unique  
not exactly new

### HELIOTROPISM

I am dreaming  
always dreaming  
a protagonist sleepwalking  
these most ordinary chapters  
of thought's well-worn grooves

things will always happen  
an anarchy of experience  
mess and distraction  
bountiful and inexhaustible  
in my epic novel  
no one is reading

to tell a little bit of truth  
here is a non-fiction version  
my story is my story  
my story is just a story  
my story is not true

*(Heliotropism, continued)*

will the sleepwalker awake  
to an illuminated darkness  
no foothold in the mutable past  
no mindless march into ephemera

can there finally be  
the silencing of language  
the inner symphony  
with only one sustained note  
of full throated living

just simple  
so simple  
being  
and not  
so simple  
being  
in the soft glow  
of an eternal now

## MONTHLY CONTEST SUBMISSIONS GUIDELINES

California State Poetry Society encourages poetic creativity by organizing monthly poetry contests. The contests are open to all poets, whether or not they are members of the CSPA. Reading fees are \$1.50 per poem with a \$3.00 minimum for members and \$3.00 per poem with a \$6.00 minimum for non-members. Entries must be postmarked during the month of the contest in which they are entered. They must consist of a cover page with all contact information (name, address, telephone number and email address) as well as the month and THEME on cover page, and the titles of the poems being submitted.

Starting in January 2023, we are accepting previously published poems for our Monthly Contest. Please note the publication where it first appeared on any such poem. There are two ways to submit, by regular mail (enclosing check) or email (using Paypal): 1) by mail to CSPA Monthly Contest – (specify month), Post Office Box 4288 Sunland, California 91041, with a check made to CSPA; and 2) by email to: [CSPAMonthlyContests@gmail.com](mailto:CSPAMonthlyContests@gmail.com) (specify month), with fees paid by Paypal to the following account – [CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety@gmail.com](mailto:CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety@gmail.com).

The monthly contest winners are notified the month after they are awarded. All of the winners for the year are listed in the first *CSPA Newsbriefs* and published in the first *Poetry Letter* of the following year. Prize-winning poems are also posted on the blog, [CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.com](http://CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.com). The 1<sup>st</sup> prize winner receives half of the prize pool for pools less than \$100. For pools of \$100 or more, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners receive \$50, \$10 and \$5, respectively. There are no exceptions to the prize disbursement rules. Please note: Do not send SAEs. We do not return poems. If you win, we will let you know. Otherwise, there are no notifications.

### CSPA Monthly Contest Themes (Revised)

- ① January: Nature, Landscape
- ② February: Love
- ③ March: Open, Free Subject
- ④ April: Mythology, Dreams, Other Universes
- ⑤ May: Personification, Characters, Portraits
- ⑥ June: The Supernatural
- ⑦ July: Childhood, Memoirs
- ⑧ August: Places, Poems of Location
- ⑨ September: Colors, Music, Dance
- ⑩ October: Humor, Satire
- ⑪ November: Family, Friendship, Relationships
- ⑫ December: Back Down to Earth (Time, Seasons)



*Zdzisław Beksiński, Untitled, 1978*

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## PAULINE DUTTON REVIEWS *SHADOWS THROWN* BY LAURA ANN REED

20 poems, 40 pages, published by Sungold Editions. \$17.25. ISBN 979-8-986729008

<https://bookshop.org/p/books/shadows-thrown-laura-ann-reed/19469972?ean=9798986729008>

Laura Ann Reed is a Pacific Northwest poet whose first chapbook, *Shadows Thrown*, offers poems of exquisite beauty and astounding images. Each trope in these poems rises out of lived feeling. This writer shows us how to endure hardship without losing human compassion and the joy of existing in a beautiful if imperfect world. What I notice first about this book is its cover which features a stunning photograph by the artist Jacob Berghoef (<https://www.saatchiart.com/jaapberghoef>). The image seems to be of trees standing in a mist or fog which might be curtains, clouds, cracked rocks, or ghosts of the past. This mysterious photo is in conversation with the often ethereal and transcendent nature of the poems themselves.

**The title poem offers a fine example of these qualities:**

### SHADOWS THROWN

In his death, my father meanders  
among the Rose Garden's stone terraces in the Berkeley Hills—  
that vast amphitheater of wind and shifting light.

He stops, shades his eyes, squints at the Bay  
and at the City beyond, its towers of steel and concrete,  
its windows that glint in the lowering sun.

(I once floated rose petals  
down Strawberry Creek while  
he played tennis—set after set.)

He prayed he'd fall dead in old age after  
acing a serve, his racquet clattering—  
although it didn't happen that way.

He glides by the courts, now, oblivious  
to the cyclone fences and nylon nets.  
He gazes instead at the shadows

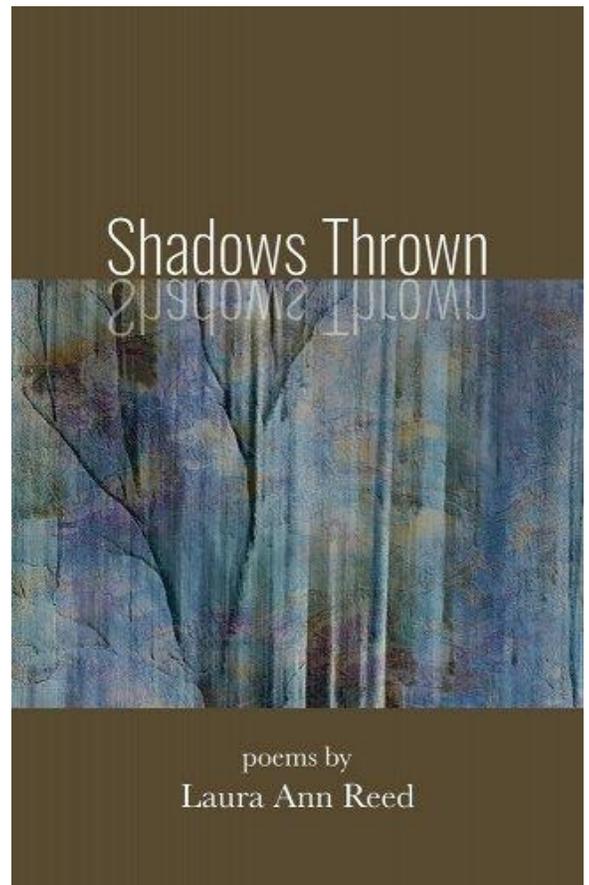
thrown by roses onto the gravel paths,  
or he slips into the small waterfall  
where Strawberry Creek spills from

a ledge into a bowl of moss-covered rock. Other times,  
he peers up at the living sky, hears traces of bright  
laughter from the throat of his child, and quietly

enters the fog that drifts up the hill from the sea,  
dissolving in a saline mist that begins to taste of him—  
barely recalling the scent of grief.

The poem, *Absolution*, is also imbued with the feeling of "shadows thrown" by what has occurred in the past, and like *Shadows Thrown*, is marked by breathtaking imagery. Here's an excerpt: "*When will we get there? I'd say/ as my parents' gray Chrysler rolled / over loose stones and weeds in the endless / dirt road that served as driveway. Dust flying up. / Windows open to the melancholy smell / of oranges fallen under trees—sweetness / sinking back into the soil. Those deep, green / shadows my own private Eden.*"

An excerpt from the poem *To a Sister I Didn't Know* sets the background from which these poems were written: the mother's loss of six infants, which left the poet as the only child of a grieving and embittered mother.



“Who’d know you had curls the shade of ripe apricots. . .  
That your death would feel like an indictment, an accusation. . .  
That I’d dream of an orange kitten dying on a cyclone fence.”

As for dark humor, here’s *Hell on Wheels*, which describes her mother’s predilection for using her motorized wheelchair as a weapon:

### HELL ON WHEELS

Those weren’t his exact words,  
but then he didn’t grow up under  
her steel thumb—  
or slashed by that well-honed tongue.

He could afford to be polite, the man  
who took over her care  
after my therapist advised me  
to move out of state.

When we spoke long-distance by phone, he told me  
other residents cringed in terror  
when her motorized three-thousand-dollar  
wheelchair rocketed in their direction.

He said my mother gazed straight ahead,  
her painter’s smock streaming out behind her  
as she raced to the art room. Mother—  
ready to crush a toe, gouge a thigh, bash a knee.

Sometimes I see her rolling down a long corridor.  
Despite polio-crippled limbs she flies  
toward whatever version of Paradise  
awaits her among brushes, turpentine, and tube of paint.

Her smock streaked with vermillion, emerald, topaz, indigo—  
floats about her emaciated frame  
like the wings of some exotic bird of prey  
maddened by an unsated hunger.

I first became acquainted with this writer’s work with the poem *How We Get the Final Word*, published last year in *Verse Virtual*. I too had a difficult mother and I appreciated the poet’s capacity to articulate the humor in a less-than-ideal relationship with a parent.

### HOW WE GET THE FINAL WORD (EXCERPT)

The room where we were sipping tea filled  
with stillness, like the aftermath of earthquakes.

I should have kept to myself my plan to write about  
her once she died. I didn’t mean to tell her, but I couldn’t  
hold it back—the fact I’d get the final word.

With *Shadows Thrown* the poet does indeed get the final word. Order the book now, so you can savor more of her inspired and inspiring words.

*Pauli Dutton, Altadena, California*

Pauli Dutton is a Los Angeles-based poet and past co-editor of *Altadena Poetry Review*.



## JAN STĘPIEN REVIEWS JULIUSZ ERAZM BOLEK'S *OGRÓD /THE GARDEN*

Juliusz Erazm Bolek *Ogród /The Garden*, Literary Waves Publishing, London 2022

Fascinated by the development of civilization (as expressed by Adam Wazyk in his poems), we moved away from the world of nature, destroying it in a cruel way. We are the only creatures that litter the environment in which we live.

Juliusz Erazm Bolek - realizing the effects of the lost bond with the world of nature - in his latest collection of poems "The Garden"— refers to a mythical paradise. Staying in it, the lyrical subject feels happy, fulfilled, internally harmonious. In this dream land, he feels safe. There are no fights here, no primitive noise. The affirmation of the natural world also has its source in the absence of material values that dominate our everyday life. It is these values that are the source of the clash of man with man. This struggle cripples us mentally and physically. In the poetic land of Juliusz Erazm Bolek, one listens to crickets, talks to flowers and birds.

*The Garden* consists of eighteen poems by Juliusz Erazm Bolek, which are a record of dreams and longings for a lost paradise. Lost through our fault, because fascinated by civilization, we trampled the natural world. Most people, living in an ever-increasing rush, are lost in everyday matters. Juliusz Erazm Bolek breaks away from this race, uses mindfulness to focus attention on what is often overlooked. In this way, the Author reveals the world to the Readers - a lost paradise that is so distant, yet at your fingertips. The Poet's poems from *The Garden* collection are like a compass for anyone who wants to get out of the tangle of seemingly important matters. This is how Juliusz Erazm Bolek throws his poetic lifebuoy. In the Poet's poems, you can immerse yourself completely in the world where the sun reigns, at least for a moment, which will revive our sensitivity. It is a world of dreams for those who are characterized by high emotional development and above-average imagination. It is an almost perfect world, because there is no man who brings destruction.

Juliusz Erazm Bolek is a poet valued by various bodies. In 2010, he received the UNESCO World Poetry Day Award for his book *Abracadabra*. In 2017, his poem "Corrida" was awarded the title of "Book of the Year", and he himself received the Golden Pen award. In 2022, the Poet was named "Optimist of the Year", especially for the life-affirming poem "Secrets of Life. Poetic calendar." Poems from the volume *The Garden* are a continuation of these affirmative ideas. *The Garden* by Juliusz Erazm Bolek is a bilingual collection. It was translated into English by the poets Anna Maria Mickiewicz and Steve Rushton. The book *Ogród /The Garden* was published by the British poetry publishing house *Literary Waves Publishing* in London. It is available worldwide on Amazon's online store.

Jan Stępień, London, UK

Juliusz Erazm Bolek

### OGRÓD THE GARDEN



Literary Waves  


#### OGRÓD I

chcesz wrócić  
do tego ogrodu  
patrz  
otwieram dłoń  
jesteśmy między  
na wpół uschniętymi drzewami  
po których do Boga  
pną się bluszcz  
nikt tu nie zajrzy  
nikt nie pamięta  
o tym ogrodzie

#### GARDEN I

you want to come back  
to this garden  
look  
I open my hand  
we are in-between  
half-dead trees  
where ivy  
climbs to God  
no one will look  
nobody remembers  
this garden

i bądź spokojna  
kiedy mnie kochasz  
ten raj  
nie wydaje owoców  
a to jabłko  
zjemy z pragnienia

*Juliusz Erazm Bolek*

be calm  
when you love me  
this paradise  
will not bear fruit  
and this apple  
we eat out of thirst

*translated by Anna Maria Mickiewicz & Steve Rushton*

## OGRÓD II

znów jestem  
w zapomnianym ogrodzie  
tu jest bezpiecznie  
tu jest spokojnie  
nikt tu ze mną nie walczy  
mimo że jestem intruzem  
kocham miłość  
i jej czerwony kolor  
zrywam zaschnięte  
dzikie małe wisienki  
otwieram dłoń  
i tańczę z samotnością  
tańczę z ciszą  
zza horyzontu  
podgląda mnie  
swoim zaczarowanym okiem  
tajemnicze słońce  
korony uschniętych drzew  
dumnie i w spokoju  
czekają końca świata  
jest ze mną  
mój wierny cień  
i dobre wspomnienia  
lata kipiącego  
pocałunkami i pieszczotami  
choć może tylko  
tak mi się zdawało  
że dosięgłem  
najważniejszego  
bluszcze i powoje  
oplatają moje myśli  
już nie wyrwę się  
trawa porosła wysoko  
nie dojrzę w niej  
koiczyny szczęścia  
nie widzę ścieżki  
którą przyszedłem  
patrzę w nadciągającą mgłę  
może zanim mnie dosięgnie  
odgadnę ile jeszcze  
ogrodów mnie czeka

*Juliusz Erazm Bolek*

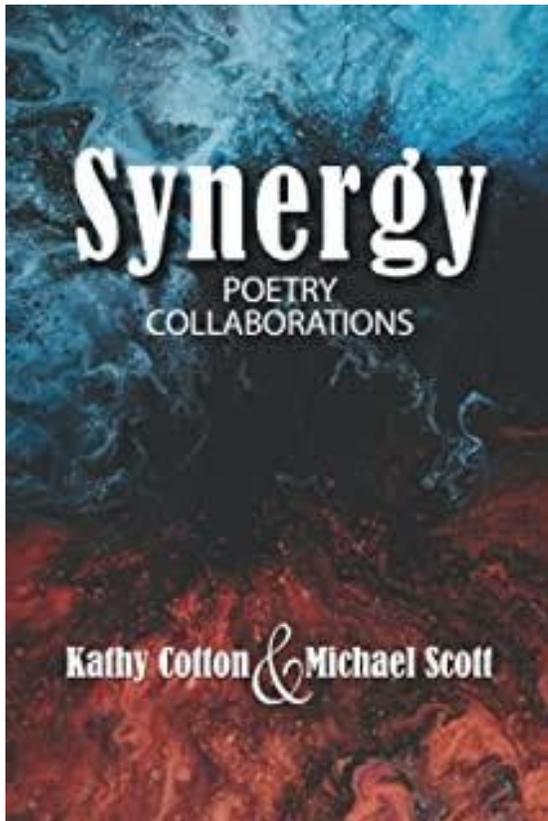
## GARDEN II

I'm back  
in a forgotten garden  
it's safe  
and quiet here  
no one is fighting me  
although I am an intruder  
I love love  
and its red colour  
I pick dry  
wild cherries  
I open my hand  
and dance with loneliness  
dance with silence  
beyond the horizon  
she's watching me  
with her enchanted eye  
the mysterious sun  
crowns of withered trees  
proud and peaceful  
awaiting the end of the world  
he is with me  
my faithful shadow  
and memories  
of summer boiling  
with kisses and caresses  
though maybe only  
I thought so  
I've reached  
the most important part  
ivy and bindweed  
entwine my thoughts  
I won't escape  
the grass has grown high  
I will not find in her  
the lucky clovers  
I can't see the path  
I have come down  
investigating approaching fog  
before it reaches  
guess how many  
gardens wait

*translated by Anna Maria Mickiewicz & Steve Rushton*

## MICHAEL ESCOUBAS REVIEWS *SYNERGY* BY KATHY L. COTTON & MICHAEL D. SCOTT

*Synergy: Poetry Collaborations* by Kathy Lohrum Cotton & Michael D. Scott  
59 poems ~ 29 Illustrations ~ 106 pages, Independently Published. ISBN: 9798353225188



In an age of felt-isolation for many, I found something rare in *Synergy*, the bold new collaborative project between poet Kathy Lohrum Cotton and Michael D. Scott, M.D. What I found was a surprise, like a mule-kick in a barn lot. I have a friend who, suffering from deep depression, said to me, "There is no light, everything is dark." As I prepared to write this review, my research took me to "How the Light Gets In" by Cotton. This turned out to be the mule-kick that changed my life and my friend's life:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in

The lines are from "Anthem" by Leonard Cohen. They form the basis of a "gloss" poem. Gloss poems amplify the lines from another poem by integrating them into a new poem. More on this later.

My friend needed an access to light, a way of thinking that let in fresh air. In these lines he found the "crack" that allowed "light" to get in. *Synergy* is worth its modest asking price if only for that!! But there is more. Much more. An elaboration of what "more" means in *Synergy* is the goal of this review.

**Genesis of *Synergy*.** Seemingly "out of the blue" Dr. Michael Scott, a relatively new poet, sent an email to Cotton with a challenge that they work on a collaborative project. (Both poets belong to the Illinois State Poetry Society.) Cotton agreed. Over time the project took shape and developed into a joint writing process which included "Collaborations," "Word-count poems," "Pairs," (individual poems written on collaborative themes), and "Singles." The singles stand alone and highlight each poet's particular gifts. My sense is that both poets reached ever-deeper into their respective source-wells for "more."

***Synergy* in Illustrations.** Exquisitely designed by Cotton, 29 illustrations enhance the poems. They consist of black and white photographs and collage art. These are conveniently titled and catalogued in *Synergy's* front matter. I was emotionally moved as I considered art and text together.

***Synergy* in Concept & Process.** Merriam-Webster defines synergy as "a mutually advantageous conjunction or compatibility." Poet Neil Blumenthal adds, "A good collaboration pushes the boundaries of both partners." Creative patterns reflecting these cornerstone concepts, began to take shape. Scott chose themes and wrote opening lines/stanzas; Cotton responded, their writing going back and forth with Cotton supplying closing lines/stanzas. *Synergy* offers a roadmap for other poets who aspire to write collaborations.

***Synergy* in Text and Form.** Kathy Lohrum Cotton is a seasoned poet with a long list of design and publication credits. Michael D. Scott, M.D., is an ER doctor, and relatively new poet. Had anyone told me that such a mix could produce a work of such quality, I would not have believed them. Shows what I know. These two artists have produced a work of near-seamless fluidity. "The Balance of Peace," sets the tone. I have italicized Cotton's lines. The collage is appropriately titled "Balance."

## THE BALANCE OF PEACE

There is a peace and solitude in having  
spare parts, spare change, spare chances—

*a hearts-ease security in one day's surplus  
maggied for the nest of a leaner day.*

Peace, though vexed when scouting  
and foraging exceed excess,

*can grow at ease in the simple balance  
of enough and not too much, sparing itself*

the collective groans of junk drawers, garages,  
cushions and hearts that obscure solitude's moans

*and smother the quiet conscience beneath  
a cacophony of acquisition and upkeep.*

Here, savor metamorphs and emerges anew:  
lithe, frugal, feathered, reposed—

*its goodness winging away from the tug of life's stuff,  
grateful for every spare chance to find peace.*

### Synergy through Topic Selection

Synergy engages life where readers live. "In the Raw," explores strategies we use to cover up who we really are. What do we do in life when the most to gain and the most to lose coincide? Another poem uses alternating tercets to highlight five aspects of touch. "On the Brink of a Bridge," challenged your reviewer to consider what it means to follow my dreams even if doing so means crossing an uncertain bridge. This poem is amplified by a figure crossing a chasm over a swaying suspension bridge. These examples barely scratch the surface of Cotton and Scott's intellectual and emotional depth.

"Flatline" highlights Michael Scott's medical background  
fleshed out in poetry.

Up.

Up, up. Then, in a fleet swing downward. To flat.  
Oh! But a shock, a jolt, a quickening, raises—  
Only to dissipate in a moment, as natural  
Equilibrium ensues.

Which is more natural? The up? The flat?  
The flux between? Flux is constant, except  
At our nadir

Where zero has both change and say so.

Up and not up is life, but

Recurrent awakenings from deaths are

Un-merry-go-rounds for faint hearts;

Devastating roller-coaster rides with short-lived

Thrills; screams galore at point naught.

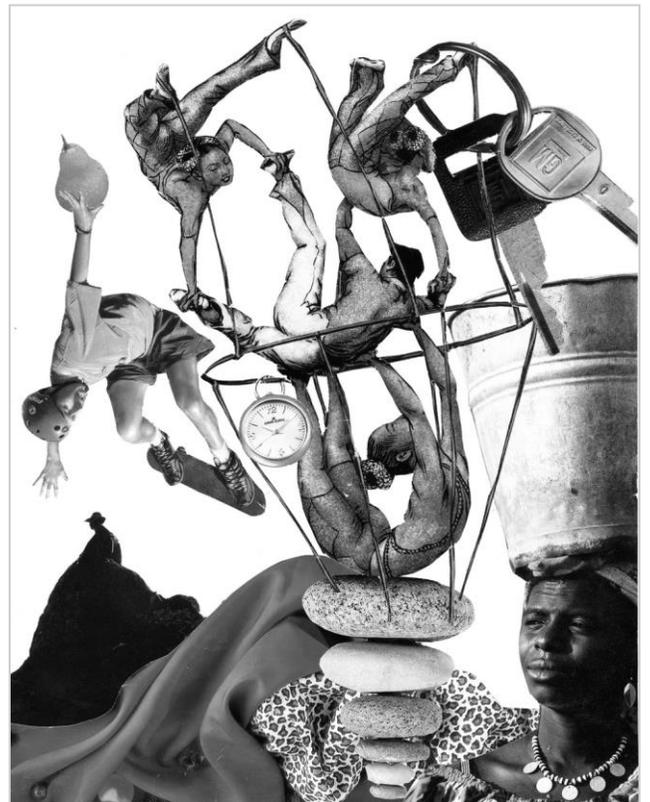
Tangents intersection no more, ghost

Blips, fluttering, from an unknown depth

On a blank screen, the blankest of screens.

Blips once spirited, heaven-prone, and gravid with potential,

That once showed life, level silent, to a flattened memory,  
of you.



I mentioned at the beginning more to come about Cotton's gloss poem "How the Light Gets In."

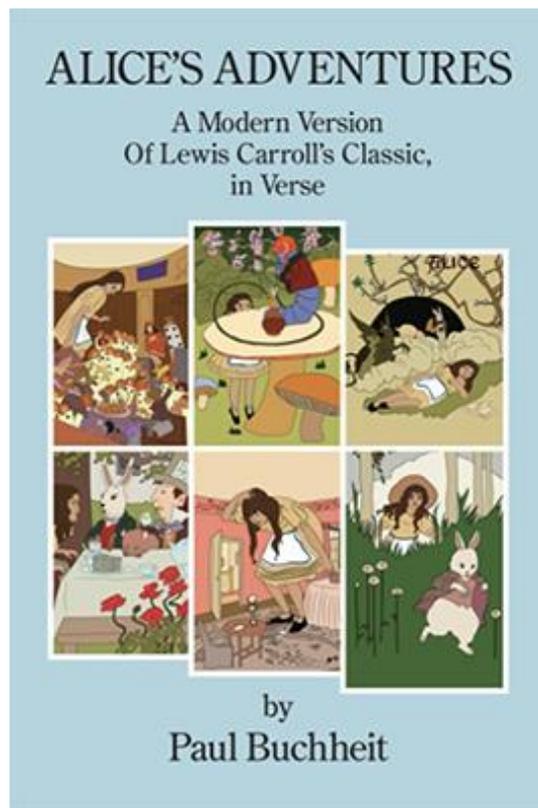
The last two stanzas, I think, bring Cotton and Scott's collaboration full circle. This collection is more, much more than two talented people who discovered one another. This volume bores in on life. Cotton and Scott, herald with one voice:

There is a crack, a crack in everything,  
the armor's chink, a cleft in stone,  
inherent flaws within us all.  
No brokenness is borne alone,  
we climb together and we fall.  
There is a crack, a crack in everything—  
that's how the light gets in;  
how beauty pierces ugliness,  
and fractured wrongs reveal the right,  
the darkness split in suddenness  
like sunrise overcoming night.  
That's how the light gets in.

Michael Escoubas  
first published in *Quill & Parchment*

## MICHAEL ESCOUBAS REVIEWS ALICE'S ADVENTURE BY PAUL BUCHHEIT

*Alice's Adventures: A Modern Version of Lewis Carroll's Classic in Verse.* Published by Kelsay,  
ISBN: 978-1-63980-183-1. 15 chapters ~ 25 color illustrations ~ 58 pages



In an age where rhyme seemingly has fallen out of vogue, Paul Buchheit has just revived it. *Alice in Wonderland* is an artistic fairyland, written in Alexandrine rhyming couplets. The Alexandrine or Iambic Hexameter line features 12 syllables, perfect for what occasions its use. Iambic feet facilitate a walk-along cadence as the story unfolds. I scanned lines at random and was impressed. Yep, 12 syllables in each line. Buchheit tells Alice's story without a hint of forced rhyming. None of this, "Well, now I've gotta come up with a rhyme, oh, gosh, let me check with rhyme-zone." Not a chance, this poet's product is as smooth as gravy on mashed potatoes!

### Historical Sketch

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) wrote his fantasy in 1862. Its protagonist was Alice Liddell. The penname for Charles L. Dodgson, the author was a poet, illustrator, storyteller, and mathematician. Close to Alice and her family, Carroll created his story at 10-year-old Alice's request. The narrative was written while on a boating and picnicking trip near Oxford, England, with Alice and her sisters. Over time the story became one of the most popular examples of the fantasy genre. *Alice in Wonderland* enjoyed critical acclaim which led to a sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*. The original story, in later years, became a significant source of income and notoriety for Ms. Liddell.

### Boredom, Talking White Rabbits, and Falling, Falling, Falling

While many have tried to attach political, psychological, or religious undertones to *Alice in Wonderland*, your reviewer chooses to treat it as a child's imaginative journey. Indeed, Paul Buchheit transports himself seamlessly into a child's world. (More of us should be so inclined!) The narrative is structured in 15 brief chapters, just the

right length for a bedtime read:

How bored was Alice! Sitting by the riverside,  
With nothing much to do, her sister occupied  
beside her with a book, a dullish exercise  
without a single page of art to please her eyes

In fact, Alice is lazy. Rather than move about picking daisies (an option requiring motivation and energy), she chooses to lay down and dream. Remarkable things happen:

... .. As she rested, though, a white  
and wide-eyed rabbit hurried by, a pleasant sight  
but unremarkable enough on normal days,  
yet now there came about a matter to amaze  
a little girl in any mood: the rabbit talked!  
“Oh dear, oh dear, I shall be late!” he said and walked

Of course, Alice, to her chagrin, could not get over how “unbunnywise” all of this was. She gives herself over to the ever-increasing evocations of her hyperactive imagination.

Once in the rabbit hole, Alice finds tiny doors, drinks a potion that shrinks her just enough to squeeze through. Then, inexplicably, her size increases, which presents another set of challenges . . . enough to make Alice sit and weep.

### **Animals and a Hookah-Smoking Caterpillar**

Masterfully illustrated by Manahil Khan, *Alice in Wonderland* presents a stunning array of animals:

As Alice shrunk again, a freakish episode  
began: a nearby pool of water overflowed  
with parrots, eagles, dodos, ducks, and many more.  
So Alice led the crowd of animals to shore.

What Buchheit does with these animals and more, in his world, will make you shudder with delight! Your reviewer got so involved he had to remind himself that this is merely fantasy!

I would be remiss by did not mentioning the “Hookah-Smoking” caterpillar. Unfamiliar to me, I resorted to the Internet to learn more about hookah pipe. What I found out was an education. I encourage the reader to do the same.

### **The Cheshire Cat, Mad-Hatter and Waking Up**

As Alice continues her journey, the pace quickens with the introduction of many new characters and impossible experiences made possible as only fantasy can do. The Cheshire cat helps Alice find her way to the Mad-Hatter’s mad tea party, then goes away but leaves his grin behind!

As in all good dreams, the dream must come to an end. As her sister gently wakes her up, Alice muses:

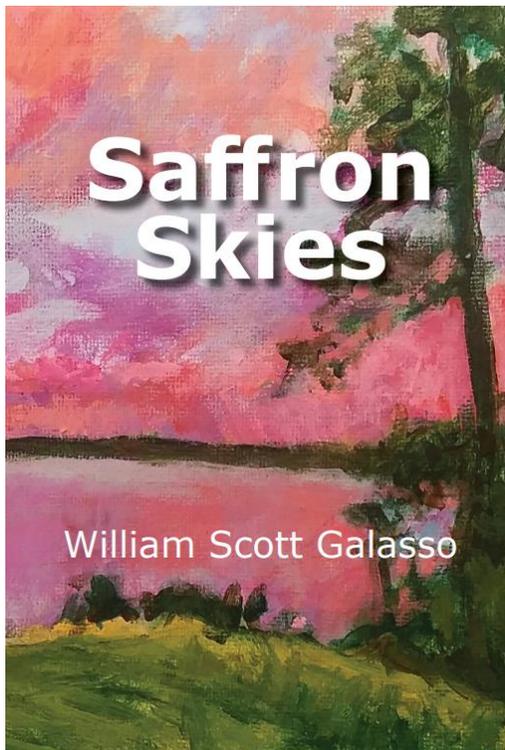
... .. “Oh dear, I dreamed  
so very much, and everybody IN it seemed  
so curious,” ... ..

In an age of “brutal” realism and “brazen” presentation of life . . . the world of *Alice in Wonderland* is a welcome and delightful respite.

Michael Escoubas  
first published in *Quill & Parchment*

## MAJA TROCHIMCZYK REVIEWS WILLIAM SCOTT GALASSO'S *SAFFRON SKIES*

Galwin Press, 2022 ISBN 978-1-7327527-3-3, paperback, 128 pages



The seventeenth book of poetry by William Scott Galasso, *Saffron Skies*, brings to its readers a feast of haiku, senryu, tanka, and haibun inspired by travel, nature, art, and the experience of life in all its fleeting beauty. These are insightful and well-crafted poems and the book is a delight to savor slowly, returning to each miniature to savor its flavor. I must say I have a strong preference for “silver-haired” poets whose work has stemmed from decades of living, in short, from wisdom. As Galasso writes “Once I rebelled, raced, / raved against time / now / I flow with it/ a leaf on a stream.” This is not resignation or capitulation to the inevitability of aging, but a profound insight into the art of living in the present, in the here and now.

Galasso’s keen power of observation merges with his sense of humor as notices “first snow / the powdered nose / of our terrier.” His humor is sometimes wry: “IRS refund / one full tank / of gas.” He also knows what makes a relationship work: “it’s not the card / it’s not the flowers... / I do dishes.” The reader has to smile reading his gems of domestic bliss. Galasso’s focus in many poems is finding joy in the quotidian, kindness and contentment while surrounded by friends, children, grandchildren.

He notices the child’s wonder: “pinwheel / stirred by the breeze / this May Day morning / the sheer delight in her four-year old eyes.” He shares with the reader the sound of happiness: “best sound / I’ve heard all day / baby’s chuckle.” He observes the absurdity of his surroundings: “senior village / the sidewalk chalked / for hopscotch.”

Not all is smiles and giggles in Galasso’s world, as he writes about the past two years of pandemic lockdowns, the suffering of refugees, the disaster of wars, including the most recent war in the Ukraine, the lies of politicians, and the suffering and separation of deaths and divorces in the family, among friends. The magic of haiku and tanka lies in capturing such serious issues in few words, selected with care to vividly express the essence of an issue: “quarantined... / all the places / I would go.” There is a sigh and wishful thinking in this short line, expressing the loneliness and helplessness of “public health” captives.

When I was a child, my mother used to wash our mouths, mine and my brother’s, with soap if she heard us bringing a curse home from the playground. It happened to me at least once, and I still remember the smooth, annoying taste, so I entirely sympathize with Galasso’s observation about “politics... / where’s that bar of soap / when needed.”

It is hard to convey the utter disaster of war to those who have not lived through it, who think that war could ever be won. There are no victors in wars, only losers, the greatest loss is that of young, promising life. The suffering of war is articulated by small, poignant details: “nicked artery / the pulse of red / on green fatigues.” I read Galasso’s book when listening to Bulat Okudzhava’s ballads in the original Russian, the favorite songs of my Belorussian father (who was a teen witness of war, not its participant). For four decades after the end of World War II, this Russian folk singer, popular throughout Eastern Europe until today, was able to share and highlight the feelings of senselessness and despair, ridicule the vain promises of rulers, give voice to the soldiers’ hope of survival. His war was a flock of black birds swirling in the darkened sky, the heavy hearts of women left behind by infantry soldiers marching off to battle in their hard-toed boots, flimsy uniforms, with shaved heads, disappearing in the mist. Cogs in an infernal machine...

If Bob Dylan could win the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature, so should Okudzhava (Georgian-Armenian poet,

composer, guitarist, and writer, b. 1924), whose poems and music helped generations of people enslaved by the Soviet empire in the Eastern European countries survive in the inhuman system. Communism was compared by Polish writer Stefan Kisielewski to an “insect society” where everyone stomps and crawls over everyone else, and all serve the evil rulers ensconced in the Kremlin. All citizens of countries left behind the Iron Countries were sold out and abandoned by their Western “allies” who signed a treaty with Stalin. Yes, politicians should have their dirty mouths washed out with soap...

The most inspirational poems of Galasso in *Saffron Skies* are those about friendship and universal kindness, extending to the beauty of nature. Yes, there is an antidote to lies, wars, pandemic. It is when “friends gather / a full year’s / worth of hugs”. This healing tonic may be found in extended families, not the “nuclear families” that communists want to replace with strangers and government workers teaching the “flavor of the hour” official ideology, but the full, multi-generational family clans, full of affection and relatives’ antics: “family album / bear hugging uncles / cheek-pinching aunts / I hear their laughter again / remember their tallest tales.” This is what makes human society human – people we love and people who love us. This love is first and foremost inherited, increasing in concentric circles from immediate families of parents and children, to aunts, nephews, uncles, nieces, granddads, grandmoms... Then come the neighbors, the compatriots that share communities, languages and cultures... until we arrive upon our shared humanity, spread over the whole planet. We are all One – it is too easy to forget these days...

The whole planet is full of life, and Galasso looks and walks carefully through his world, in kindness: “big feet / little cricket sharing / space.” There are many poems inspired by Galasso’s travels to the ocean shores and mountains of our beautiful continent. He is content to be “moongazing / the coyote / and I.” He admires the nature’s power of clashing continental plates, volcanoes, and waves. He responds to the reflection of the natural beauty in the eyes of the beloved.

His poems, organized in a calendar cycle from New Year’s through the seasons and holidays of Christmas, spring equinox, summer solstice, autumn and Thanksgiving, portray the beauty of human art (Hopper, Whitman, folk singers) and human cities, as well as the magic of the natural world. Galasso’s book is a document of a consummate skill of a master word-crafter who can conjure up whole worlds in a few lines, capture the passing of time, gaze in awe at the shifting clouds and untangle complex emotions. His highly-recommended book features many poems that call for repeated reading. One of my favorites is a haibun that I’ll quote in its entirety to end my review:

### CAMBRIA

Sipping coffee, morning fog burns off, apricot sun, hues of blues in sea and sky, thud of sandals on the boardwalk descending to beach, now barefoot, ahh cool sand, cool water lapping feet, waves crest the manes of horses running, their rhythmic canter hypnotic, seals resting on rookery, some heads bobbing in seaweed, feasting on fish. Sandpipers, terns, cull the tideline, a chevron of pelicans skim the rollers curling in

fetal tuck  
in mother’s womb  
a sudden shift

Night: my wife and I, hand-in-hand make our way to the lookout point, light from inns and boutique hotels, paint the ocean softly. We resist the chill, arms encircled, standing silently on the bluff’s perch, a sliver of moon, planets, constellations, Heaven’s River, stars in obsidian countless diamonds, black and white in harmony

firepit  
sparks rise up  
in her eyes

~ Maja Trochimczyk, Los Angeles, California

## CSPS 36<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST DEADLINE – 30 JUNE 2023

The California State Poetry Society is pleased to announce its 36th Annual Poetry Contest. **Submissions Accepted March 15<sup>th</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. PRIZES:** \$100, \$50, \$25 Cash for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prizes. The three prize-winning poems will be published in the *California Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2023 Winter). Poems selected for up to six Honorary Mentions may be published in the CQ or in the *Poetry Letter*, depending on the Editors' choices. Reading fees: Members, \$3.00/poem; Non-members, \$6.00/poem. Winners will be announced in September 2023. Submissions are welcome of original, unpublished poems in English, with 80-line (two-page) limit per poem. Submissions are only accepted by mail.

**HOW TO SUBMIT:** Send a cover letter with all poet information (mailing address, email address, name, phone) and a list of the titles of all submitted poems, as well as one copy of each poem with no poet identification, and a check for the appropriate reading fees to: **Annual Contest Chair / P.O. Box 4288 Sunland, CA 91041-4288**



**CONTEST JUDGE:** Polish-British bilingual poet **ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ** agreed to serve as this year's Contest Judge, while Maja Trochimczyk, CSPS President, will continue as Contest Chair. Ms. Mickiewicz is a poet, writer, editor, translator, and publisher. She is the founder of the publishing house Literary Waves that published many volumes of poetry in English and Polish. Born and raised in Poland, Anna moved to California and then to London, where she has lived for many years. She is a member of the English Pen. Her poetic works have appeared in the United States, UK, Australia, Canada, Poland, Mexico, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Salvador, India.

She was honoured with the Gloria Artis medal for Merit to Culture by the Polish Ministry of Culture, the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity and The Joseph Conrad Literary Prize (USA). In 2022 as part of the 3rd International Day of Polish Diaspora Education, organised by the Polish Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities in London, she was awarded the title of Polish Artist of the Year. She is a member of the Jury of the K M Antrhu International Literature Prize in India and the Chapter of Madal for PoEzja Londyn.

Mickiewicz received her Master of Arts degree from Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Poland. She also obtained a certificate in Media Studies from Birkbeck College, London UK. As a student, she was involved in the democratic and civil rights movement in Poland in the Eighties. She was one of the editors of the civil rights' independent magazine *Wywrotowiec (The Rebel)*. After moving to England, she worked as a correspondent covering literary and cultural issues for the Polish press and radio. For many years she was a member of the Board of the Union of Polish Writers Abroad.

She cooperated with many organizations, including with Channel 4 in the UK and the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw. Together with the British translator of Polish literature, Noel Clarke, she took part in the creation of the exhibition *Eagle and Lion*, which was presented during the official visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Poland. In 2013 at the University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, she organized the World Premiere of World Poetry Day - European Literary Dialogues. She belongs to several poetry groups in London: Enfield Poets, The Highgate Society's Poetry Group and Exiled Writers Ink. She often presents her works at open poetry meetings. In 2013 and 2018, evenings devoted to her work were organised by the groups Poets Anonymous and Exiled Writers Ink at the prestigious Poetry Cafe belonging to the British Poetry Society. In an online competition announced by Poetry Space for poem week, her poem "A gray coat" took first place. She has appeared on the Poets Anonymous poetry radio many times, presenting her work.