



## *CSPS Poetry Letter*

Hello, dear Friends of Poetry!

Welcome to the second issue of the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the California State Poetry Society's *California Quarterly (CQ)*! We continue in this issue, Vol. 40 No. 2 edited by Nancy Cavers Dougherty, our series commemorating *GREAT CQ POETS AND EDITORS* with a tribute to James MacWhinney.

I met Jim MacWhinney, who is Maura Harvey's dad (Maura is also a *CQ* Editor), many years ago when Julian Palley showed me his poetry and introduced me to him. Incidentally, Maura wrote her dissertation in Spanish Literature at UC Irvine with Jerry as her advisor. Jerry Palley himself, whom Jeanne Wagner commemorated in *CQ* Vol. 39 No. 4, is bearing up valiantly as an 80+ year old person with a razor-sharp mind. He resembles, as I told him yesterday, every day more *Don Quixote de la Mancha* than a retired university professor. Naturally, he was flattered! In upcoming issues, we will celebrate the work and creativity of other *CQ* movers and shakers; the next will be Jack Fulbeck in the Vol. 40 No. 3 issue, edited by Maura Harvey.

We are indeed in a mood to celebrate and hope that you are, too! We want to thank all our members for having been so faithful to us and to the cause of poetry world-wide. We would also like to urge all past and present contributors to become members! As outlined in the *CQ* issues themselves, there are several membership categories. Please send your memberships directly to our Membership Chair, Richard M. Deets, at: **2560 Calabria Court, Dublin, CA 94568** or contact him at [RDeets@att.net](mailto:RDeets@att.net) if you have any questions.

And *do* keep the poems coming! Submissions to *CQ* Vol. 40 No. 3 were accepted until the end of June. Submissions for Vol. 40 No. 4 are being accepted until the end of September. We hope soon to establish a website to facilitate submissions – and a whole lot of other stuff!

Thanks to all those who have written us in praise of the *CQ*. And I've some good advice from steady contributor Charles Rammelkamp, editor of *The Potomac Quarterly*. When he goes to a poetry reading, he mentions the *CQ*, inviting people to submit to it (Box 7126, Orange CA 92863 – until our Internet web site opens for submissions).

Our greetings to you. Enjoy the water and green grass – *and good writing!*

Yours truly,

Margaret  
[UMSaine@gmail.com](mailto:UMSaine@gmail.com)



Here is a fine poem first published in *CQ* Vol. 38 Nos. 1 & 2:

### **INQUISITIVE EYES**

In brief moments,  
On passing walkways,  
Eyes bearing light  
Come to behold me,  
Filling softly  
The hollow of my soul,

Precious moments  
That give me to see  
Wisdom and love,  
And take comfort  
In the beautiful eyes  
That regard me,

Serene moments  
Of the eternal sphere,  
Where thoughts and feelings,  
In silent expression,  
Make of our solitude  
A joyful encounter.

*Catherine Ross, Riverside CA*

In the following, I present two CSPS Monthly Contest winners from the March contest, as well as one last poem published elsewhere.

### **SPRING DESPITE GNAWING TORMENT**

I sit among green shrubbery in our backyard  
while sun warms the earth and bird twitter  
fills the air. Orange blossoms unfold,  
their sweet scent is carried on the breezes.  
All around me nature renews herself  
in spring celebration. Unthinkable not  
to be here next spring. Inside me something  
ugly, malevolent rears its head, biting  
with fangs. I wish I had nature's powers



to heal and revive. Looking at a cornflower  
sky, I briefly forget. Splendor of spring  
contrasts with chaos in my life, making me  
keenly aware of moments such as this, of joy  
I'd have to miss. My eye catches lazy lizards  
sunning themselves on the rocks. Hummingbirds  
dancing, circle the honeysuckle, insects seek  
nectar sustenance, wildlife in motion, thriving.  
Life goes on with or without me.

*Ninette Freed, Palm Desert, California*  
*1st Prize, CSPS March 2014 Monthly Contest*

### **A MOTHER SPEAKING**

On the first warm day,  
we planted tulip bulbs  
you and I, a mother-daughter team.  
“Not too deep,” I cautioned,  
“and not too far apart.”

Then the fever came.  
You lay among the sheets  
like a bulb planted too deep.  
I sat there while you dreamed  
and in the darkness whispered words,  
love to bring you back,  
to spark the bloom again.  
I regretted I'd admonished  
when you muddied the floors and  
badgered the cat, wasted all my flowers.  
At your side, I stayed for hours  
and you hardly stirred.  
In the black delirium I learned  
what it is to be a mother.

When the fever broke, life resumed,  
but the strain of fallow years  
pulled us wide apart.  
Remembering the tulips we put down,  
I must have planted you too deep.

*Lillian M. Fisher, Alpine, California*  
*2nd prize, CSPS March 2014 Monthly Contest*



## NEON NIGHTS

Up on the bandstand  
honeyed sounds pearl from  
twin horns  
elegy in brass  
bemoaning the fifties

leftover luggage, it's what  
says you're home  
loose and easy in  
an old man's dreamland  
air thick with Baker, Coltrane  
cool Clifford Brown

nursing a tonic water  
dictated by decades  
you peer thru layered smoke  
to take in the piano player  
mumbling Buddha, lost to Nirvana  
who, from cuffs of dazzling white  
sends ten brown mice  
scurrying up the keyboard

damp brow bathed in luster  
he bends close to the ivory  
talking times, places, that  
he's been and you've been  
eras lost to lemonlight

no guns go off, no  
young girls bare their legs  
still, you draw one  
quick breath, knowing  
you've caught a ride  
back to when  
nights that mattered  
were strung in neon

*Thomas Feeny, Raleigh, North Carolina.  
First published in Verve, 1997*

Your *Poetry Letter* editor

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