



CSPS Poetry Letter

Dear Poets, CSPS Members and Friends of the *Poetry Letter*!

In connection with our project of collecting old *CQ* issues and finding out about our “origins,” I was very happy to receive an email from Howard Lachtman, one of the original editors of the *CQ* back in the 1970s and 1980s. Here is what he writes:

Dear Margaret,

I noted your online request to hear from anyone who knew CQ editors Ken Atchity and/or Howard Lachtman. I knew both, the former briefly and the latter since birth.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about those good old days of poetry writing and editing (can it really be 40 years or more ago?) and many thanks for your kind words about our efforts on behalf of CQ. It was one of my first literary and editorial adventures of a long career that continues into retirement, having just written a poem about my memorable ride through the American southwest and writing/collecting short stories for a book of same.

Yours truly, and with best holiday wishes,

Howard Lachtman

I have threatened to come visit and do an oral interview* of Howard, especially because he knew himself from birth; how impressive! ☺ And you can be sure the transcript of it will be published in the *Poetry Letter* right here!

* The oral interview started at the New York docks as a project by professional sociologists. The purpose was to solicit historical and biographical information from people not represented in official history – that is, workers (particularly immigrants) and their interesting life stories. The oral interview has a determined but flexible protocol and is afterwards transcribed in written form.

CSPS has also received a copy of *Poets in Review*, by Eric Greinke. We are pleased to receive it and thank the author and publisher, Presa Press, Michigan, very much.

Please be so kind to sign up as CSPS members. You can do it on the www.CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.org website, or by contacting Richard Deets, our VP/Membership, at rdeets@att.net. And here as always is my email: umsaine@gmail.com. And please do submit your poems directly to www.CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.org!

Wishing you a *Happy New Year* of good writing,

Margaret Saine



The first poem in this issue, one published several times, comes to us from the United Kingdom:

Westminster Bridge

*For Arthur Raymond Bennett,
expatriate British painter*

A robust man in his seventies
pauses at the centre of the span.
A decade younger, his slight
companion seems more frail.

Heedless drivers speed
with confidence to destinations
known and certain
as that faithful chiming clock.

The wind from the west
waters the eyes of both men.
They squint and turn to look
downriver. The Thames curves

toward a veiled horizon.
Beyond is a sea of ambiguity—
its misted possibilities saturated
with urgency and relevance.

From his bag the larger man
withdraws a canister
and removes the lid.
He hesitates while his friend

steadies him against the parapet.
Ashes swirl on the wind
beneath the discerning Eye.
The crossing is complete. Ray is home.

David Olsen, Abingdon, United Kingdom

First Prize, *Deddington Open Writers Competition*, 2009

Republished on *deddingtonfestival.com*, 2009

Reprinted in *New World Elegies*, Finishing Line Press, 2011

Reprinted in *Unfolding Origami*, Cinnamon Press, 2015



Our next poem won an Honorable Mention in the 2015 CSP Annual Contest:

SKYTALK

Like a language you've studied for years

constellations: Orion, Cassiopeia,
Castor and Pollux snap into focus
and it just makes sense. North is not

a direction but a god whose
torque brails the sky. Brass

will replace gold one day. Ices

will be free on the street corners
of Manhattan and the gorges of
Alaskan prairie will sing inaudibly.

Against the stars, the pale blue
and red dotted lines of a practice book
the planets ascribe themselves as cursive.

Do not please your indecision.
Mars retrogrades in Libra—

do not punch the wall.

Fate is a pulley system in the mountains,
you've used it well. Tonight the sky
is clear. The moon is set to blush

like a human girl, full, ready to let go.
But a San Francisco clear is
all gleaning against the fog.

It's like looking up
at a misdubbed film. Interpretive

dance. The message is this is not
the time for the message.

Xan Roberti, San Francisco, California
Honorable Mention, 2015 CSPS Annual Contest



Our last poem is a lovely childhood memory, also in the clouds:

KITING

My skies have not seen kites since ones
we flew at ten, at twelve.
We climbed the hill above the creek—snow
might still be on the north sides of boulders—climbed
beyond the boggy cow pasture.
Holsteins looked on with mild
interest.

We lay on our backs—
after the first run into wind,
playing out cheap cotton string,
not too fast, waiting for
the first tug, would it hold?
It held, always held, that string.
Holding the balsa tip, awaiting the grab
of wind, the thin paper bellying,
our shouts pushing it up—
we lay on our backs in the tall grass.

Rolling hills—today's, mine—ocean hills:
so very green in winter, so ochre in summer,
so nearly bare—a copse or two, a cow
or two—hills empty and round and crying
for kites but bare of kites.
Quite bare of kites, children in my world
do not kite.

Then,
mine was blue, my brother's yellow
with tails long and majestically multi-patterned:
strips from dishtowels worn through.
String all the way out, surely above the stratosphere by now.

We lay upon our backs, thrilled
to thoughts of sudden lightning, talked
about whether clouds could see us.

Diane Lee Moomey, El Granada, California
First published in *Perfume River Poetry Review*, 2013

