



CSPS Poetry Letter

Dear Poets, California State Poetry Society (CSPS) Members, and Friends of the *Poetry Letter*!

I am traveling in Europe, visiting family, spending time in Rome, and attending two poetry festivals—one in Kosovo and the other in Strumica, Republic of Macedonia. My sons ask: “Why not Paris?” The answer is simple: “I wasn’t invited!” But therein lies a trend. While the great international literature festivals continue to thrive, smaller ones open their doors to a profusion of writers from a variety of nations. Often, but not always, such festivals are generated through the electronic media: on my birthday, more than a hundred Italian poets congratulated me on Facebook (FB): I had joined FB deliberately, seven years ago, wanting to learn to write Italian and to meet fellow poets. The rest of the well-wishers were enthusiastic readers of poetry in general or people involved in the arts.

One good thing about global media is that contacts between diverse countries no longer must go through New York, Paris, or London. Add Los Angeles, if you will. Now you have Nepalese poets directly contacting the Portuguese, and Ghanaians writing to Danes. In postcolonial studies, this thing is called non-hegemonic discourse, occurring with the help of lots of translations, and as a lingua franca, Global English. I think it is an exciting development.

In the old days, good translators of poetry produced “Nachdichtungen,” which amounted really to original poems in the language translated into. There were no bilingual readers who could compare the translations with the original. It was poetic license in its heyday, but alas, not true to the original poet’s words. In 1913, Rabindranath Tagore—or Ravīndranātha Thākura, as we should perhaps finally call him—did not win the Nobel Prize for his poems in Bengali, but on the basis of the English translations of his copious output.

Fahredin Shehu, one of the poets who writes in Albanian and also in Global English, organized the Kosovo festival. He says he can invite every poet only once. Otherwise, the politicians who fund the festival will say, “Ah, Fahredin has invited his drinking buddies again!” One thing is for sure: there will be wine and song—as well as, we hope, some women (poets, I mean). ☺

We will be looking for your *CQ* submissions, either through the PO box or our website (CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.org), and for your Monthly Contest poems. Take a breather before the next Annual Contest!

Wishing you a good rest of the summer and fun with reading John Harrell’s “early-out” issue, I remain,

Your *Poetry Letter* Editor,

Margaret Saine
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Our first poem is by DJ Tyrer, a poet, fiction writer and publisher from the United Kingdom. He is the person behind Atlantean Publishing, which placed second in the *2015 Data Dump Award for Genre Poetry*. Atlantean Publishing also puts out a fine series of broadsides called *THE BARD*. Several *CQ* contributors, among them Jane Stuart, have been published as BARDS. Just send six poems to their website at <http://atlanteanpublishing.blogspot.co.uk>, and see what happens! ☺

AWKWARD CONVERSATION

I seem to be a cipher
Onto which others project themselves
Making assumptions about who I am
My past and my beliefs
Leading to some awkward conversations
Cutting to the quick of my being
Forcing me to bite my tongue
Unless I want an awkward confrontation

DJ Tyrer, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, United Kingdom
First appeared in *The Pen*, October 2013

Our second poem is by Kathy Lundy Derengowski, a CSPA member who is a regular *CQ* contributor and a frequent prize winner in the CSPA monthly poetry contests. Her poem, with its satirical glance, is also a timely plea for tolerance and acceptance:

THE OTHERS

The others are Asian, the others are gay,
They simply refuse to do things our way.
The others have nose rings, are Jewish or Black
Live in ghettos, get welfare, snort cocaine, smoke crack.

The others are stylish and know how to dress
Spend time at museums and watch PBS.
The others sing Gospel, spend life on their knees
Preach fire and brimstone, storm God with their pleas.



The others are Southern, eat Po' boys and grits
Collect unemployment and live by their wits.
The others are scholars at Harvard and Yale
Like classical music, drink beer—call it “ale.”

The others are anyone causing a fuss
The others are everyone different from us!
They're your sister your mother your father your brother.
At the end, we are all of us, One ... and an “other.”

Kathy Lundy Derengowski, San Diego, California
First Place, CSPS Monthly Poetry Contest, June 2017

Our third poem is by Meryl Natchez, another CSPS member and winner in the CSPS monthly poetry contests. The poem is about what we owe trees, other than our ability to breathe:

APOLOGY TO TREES

I apologize, trees,
for the many drafts of poems
and the reams and reams of paper
I've squandered to earn my living.
I apologize to the roots and rhizomes
and fungi, filaments of hyphae stretched sentient
between them—a resonant sheath of underground tree.
I apologize for my wood-beam house,
its redwood deck, the cords of firewood,
for gift wrap, grocery bags, and individual,
lunch-sized juice boxes
I could have done without.
But I make no apology for books,
May they support each tendril of consciousness
we stretch between us,
so that we, too, may vibrate—
each one of us
nurtured by our own kind.

Meryl Natchez, Berkeley, California
1st Place, CSPS Monthly Poetry Contest, January 2017



Our last poem is by Niels Hav, a Danish poet who has made a special effort to reach out to the poets of the world, especially in Asia. The poem was translated into Japanese from the original Danish by P. K. Brask and Patrick Friesen, but I actually have an original earlier translation by Niels himself—which surely he had Brask and Friesen revise. That is often how I proceed when I write in Italian. An Italian poet friend has to check those pesky prepositions! ☺

HUNTING LIZARDS IN THE DARK

During the killings unaware
we walked along the lakes.
You spoke of Szymanowski,
I studied a rook
picking at dog shit.
Each of us caught up in ourselves
surrounded by a shell of ignorance
that protects our prejudices.

The holists believe that a butterfly in the Himalayas
with the flap of a wing can influence the climate
in Antarctica. It may be true.
But where the tanks roll in
and flesh and blood drip from the trees
that is no comfort.

Searching for truth is like hunting lizards
in the dark. The grapes are from South Africa,
the rice from Pakistan, the dates grown in Iran.
We support the idea of open borders
for fruit and vegetables,
but however we twist and turn
the ass is at the back.

The dead are buried deep inside the newspaper,
so that we, unaffected, can sit on a bench
on the outskirts of paradise
and dream of butterflies.

Niels Hav, Copenhagen, Denmark
First appeared in (Japanese) *Poetry Kanto* #27, 2011

