



California State Poetry Society

Post Office Box 7126, Orange, California 92863

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CSPS Poetry Letter

Dear Poets and Lovers of Poetry,

I am at the 14th International Poetry Festival in Granada, Nicaragua, founded by Ernesto Cardenal, the poet, champion of liberation theology and student of Thomas Merton. I met Cardenal in 2009 during a conference at Grand Valley College in Michigan, a function at which we both read. It was then he received a call from Chile letting him know he had won the *Pablo Neruda* prize. We were all very happy for him. He had won the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* (*Peace Prize of the German Publishers*) at the Frankfurt Book Fair of 1980, but he donated it to cultural affairs while he was the Nicaraguan Minister of Culture for the first Sandinista government right after the defeat of the Somoza dictatorship. The festival in Granada is by invitation only and I am very proud and happy that I was invited.

I hope you enjoy the poems I've selected for this *Poetry Letter* accompanying **CQ** Volume 44 Number 1, edited by Maja Trochimczyk.

Wishing you a good spring season and lots of joy and good writing in a brand new year, I remain

Your *Poetry Letter* editor,

Margaret Saine
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Today I will delve into old *CQ*s to find some great poems we have published and forgotten—some maybe from even before our current editors’ times. In the 2003 Summer edition of the *CQ*, editor Elaine Lazzeroni, who has herself died in the meantime, had the wonderful thought of remembering past poets and CSPA members. It now seems a lot of them had died in 2002. James E. MacWhinney, who died in 2001, was a friend of Julian Palley and a number of other editors of the *CQ*. He also happens to be the father of current editor, Maura Harvey. Here is James’ poem, which reminds us of the sometimes stern and strained relations in past generations between son and father or other male ancestors. This, by the way, is one of the social “givens” to which Sigmund Freud devoted much of his research. The poem allows us a peak into the past:

AMERICAN GOTHIC DIVIDED BY TWO

I see you in me; you must have seen me.
I knew you when I was knee-high;
You didn’t smile then, either.
You were my father then,
As I am yours now.
Your portrait is dark in our dark hall,
Great Grandfather!

Where did the days go?
Why do I half love, half reject you?
That stern and limited gaze
Has no imagining, no agonizing,
No allowance for lust or betrayal;
A life without shame, without a spark.
The Old Deluder Satan fears your pitchfork.

James E. MacWhinney, Oceanside, California
First appeared in *CQ* Vol. 29 No. 3



This second poem is by current *CQ* editor Pearl Karrer and was first published by late editor Jack Fulbeck in the Spring 2004 edition of the *CQ*, the cover of which is adorned with the oil painting “Islanders,” by Mary Fulbeck. The poem is filled with tantalizing possibilities—or perhaps impossibilities? It reminds us that poets can write role poems in which they are at liberty to let someone else speak in their poem and to assume roles that are not at all autobiographical. As the French poet Alain Bosquet says, *Poets have only one right: to contradict themselves.*

ONCE UPON

Once I grew the toes of a gecko,
walked upside down on the ceiling—

dived into a sea cave,
surfaced spangled with scales—

looked through the eyes of a fly,
found myself fighting off dust mites—

hid inside an oak,
learned the language of leaves—

loaned my bones to a shaman,
danced on red hot coals—

discarded my mother, my lover,
climbed up the chimney—

Pearl Karrer, Palo Alto, California
First appeared in *CQ* Vol. 30 No. 2



Last but not least, here is a lovely nature poem by Greg Gregory, who placed in the December 2017 Monthly Poetry Contest (*The Best of Your Best* previously published or award-winning poems). A frequent **CQ** contributor and longtime CSPS member, his poem reminds us that a landscape to a poet is much more than what it seems: it is a repository of memories, colors, fantasies. Greg Gregory was also the winner of the 2014 CSPS Annual Poetry Contest.

WETLANDS

The shallow water waits.
It reflects an illusion of timelessness.

When I was in the first grade,
after a night's rain a large pool of water
stood still as a mirror on the playground
just below the swings.

I swung over it, and felt if I fell off
I would fall into the clear reflection
down into the sky
and never stop falling.

In my retirement birdwatching,
I see cranes glide in above a marsh.
They return, fragile in their feathers,
delicate, persistent as past dreams
or the blink of an eye.

Remembered motion is magic,
flying on swings, flying into
a soft mirror of water
that keeps reflecting back
things that break its surface.

Greg Gregory, Antelope, California
2nd Place, CSPS 2017 December Monthly Contest

Once again, enjoy what is left of winter, step smartly into spring, and *good writing!*

Margaret Saine

