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Edited by Maja Trochimczyk

Poetry Letter

California State Poetry Society

FAREWELL TO MARGARET SAINE

awaking to the
New Year's first sun, portent of
many suns to come

Margaret Saine

On 1 January 2024, the first day of the last year of her life, Margaret Saine posted this haiku and the photo of the sun on her Facebook page. California State Poetry Society will always miss Margaret (Ute Margaret Saine, Ph.D.), an extraordinary poet, photographer, translator, poetry activist, expert in literature and the arts. Margaret Saine was born in postwar Germany and wrote her first poem at the age of eight. After immigrating to the U.S., she received her Ph.D. in French and Spanish from Yale University. She taught French and Hispanic literatures at Chapman University in California. She also taught languages and cultural studies in Arizona, as well as wrote and translated poetry in five languages (German, English, French, Spanish and Italian). Until 1990, she only wrote poems in her native German. *Bodyscapes* published by Pacific Writers Press in 1995 was her first English language poetry collection, positively reviewed in the *Los Angeles Times*. With poets Julian Palley and Florinda Mintz she was a co-founder of PEN Orange County and served as its president. Since 1991 to 2021, she served as a board member and Secretary of the CSPS while she was a CQ editor since 1994. She also edited the CSPS *Poetry Letter*, initially added to CQ mailings, and later posted on the CSPS website. Saine served twice as the CQ Annual Contest Chair. Her contributions to our society have been manifold and profound—she added lots of translations and new poets to the CQ, making it an international journal, helped John F. Harrell (then President) stuff and mail envelopes, and for ten years, until June 2019, she gathered all submissions from the Orange P.O. Box, distributing them to the editors and contest judges. She left an indelible mark on the CSPS!

Her poems and transations appeared in many journals here and abroad. She published five books of poetry in English – *Bodyscapes, Words of Art, Lit Angels, Gardens of the World* and *A Book of Travel,* as well as six haiku chapbooks in five languages. Four books of poems and a postwar childhood memoir were published in Germany – *Das Flüchtige bleibt (The Ephemeral Remains); Das Weite suchen (A Yen to Travel); Atem der Stille (The Breath of Silence); Ein Lied davon (Same Old Song);* and *Ungeschicktes Kind (Awkward Child). Searching for Bridges* is a bilingual English-Arabic book of her poems edited by Palestinian poet and critic Nizar Sartawi. Saine's volume of poems in Italian was published in 2020. Since 2008, she wrote over five thousand haiku and is also known for her artistic photographs, posted on her Facebook page and used as illustrations in her poetry. I had a distinct pleasure of working with her on publishing two of her books - *Lit Angels* and *Gardens of the Earth*, issued by Moonrise Press. Her poems and translations appeared in many anthologies and journals including lifeandlegends.com, fekt.org, verseville.org, stagebuzz.in, www.setumag.com, thepotomacjournal.com, and prachyareview.com, to mention a few.

After Margaret Saine's death, many poets posted tributes on her Facebook page. Katarzyna Sala wrote "*Dear Ute Margaret Saine, Thank you for being there, thank you for your inspiration, your translations, your corrections and your support for our literary projects. I will never forget the hours of waiting for the train from Rabat to Marrakesh, in the crowded station, among the people hurrying back and forth. There in the corner, leaning against the monumental pillars: Ute Margaret Saine and Mauricio Gomes, bent over the pages of the poetry books, reading and translating each other's poems. Let's talk more, one day, in the other world. Rest in peace.*"

As a farewell to Margaret let me quote one of her brief poems posted with a typical, blurry and impressionistic photograph of raindrops.

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In exactly how many words
can you say it, asks Okham
we poets don't count the words
unless we write in verse
we poets walk around rhyme
like a cat around hot porridge
and we wander all over creation
like clouds, wondering if
the wind will transform us
into rain

August 13, 2021

Maja Trochimczyk, CSPS President

FEATURED POET — MARGARET SAINE

POEMS FROM *LIT ANGELS* (2017)

https://moonrisepress.com/saine---lit-angels.html#/

Published in February 2017, Margaret Saine's *Lit Angels* (=Literature Angels ~ Angels of Light) is a collection of poetry inspired by literature and the arts. Written in English, the volume includes several translations into German, Arabic, French and Italian. Poet Mani Suri considers this book as an "elegant, wise, and worldly oeuvre, a distilled reflection of her sagesse and sophistication." Poet Virginia Jasmin Pasalo observes that "like her photography, Saine's poems breathe movement, shadow and light that immediately transport the reader to the experience of moving within the social fabric of her woven words." The book presents over 70 poems and is illustrated with 14 photographs by the poet.

Rita Stanzione, from Salerno, Italy, wrote, "The poetics of Margaret Saine is a pleasant flight, ranging back and forth between signifiers and the signified, judiciously exploring art and nature. Each element is endowed with meaning, connecting it with human presence and human feeling. Under the poet's gaze, a movement in time occurs that returns it to us, it tells us of other voices who are leaving traces in personal and universal history. An interesting, marvelous exchange occurs between the forms of being and their most profound abode, like a window to the sun, opening and smiling at us."

THE TREE OUTSIDE

Above the window sill
the minuscule stippled leaves
dance in the breeze

Mulberry trunk
cut by the window sill
as if as if—

By inner eye we know
the tree to be intact

Trunk reaches down to roots
where the atoms come from
roots and trunk
spread into sky
rhizomes breathing
the vital breath
that sustains us

Margaret Saine

LIKE A REED

Let every breeze
caress you in passing
let it sweep your skin
rake your bones
let every breeze
sweep right through you

Hold your body like a reed
slightly inclined
against the wind
aligned in a voyage
slightly voyant
and slightly blind
but forever floating
on the enveloping breeze

Margaret Saine

HORIZONS

We are all
each other's species

Caught in a confused web
of fact and feeling

Lands thought safe and secure
have drifted and absconded

We are stories of sentiment
with occasional bits of truth

A sediment pierced by sunrays
over the morning horizon

In whose embrace we
arise from sleep

Groping vaguely forward
into a new day a second look

I want to be your deep down under
evening embrace

Your Calypso promise darling
on the daring side of love

We are all
each other's species

Margaret Saine

WRITING ON WATER

Rêvant de cette société/où tous auront loisir d'écrire. Dreaming of a society/where all would have the leisure to write. ~ Guillevic

After I beat the ink to pieces
on the tablet
I drop the bits like letters
on the watery sheet
one by one
I write myself on water
spread myself thin on the surface
see bleeding shadows descend
waving and wafting
deep into the water world

Becoming algae and fish
the creatures of water
released from my mind
set out on a new life
a watery freedom
a run of their own
mending the tear in the fabric
forming of my words
underwater gardens
tribute to becoming again
a part of nature

Margaret Saine

POEMS FROM *GARDENS OF THE EARTH – ACCORDING TO NATURE* (2018)

Introductory essay from this volume is in *Poetry Letter* 4 of 2023
https://www.californiastatepoetrysociety.com/2024/01/poetry-letter-no-4-of-2023-part-i-poems.html

PLANTEN UN BLOMEN

A rose is a rose is a rose
says Gertrude
perhaps not without defiance
I'm pretty sure she meant
a rose is a woman is a woman
The Roses and the Hyacinths
the Jasmins, Irises and Heathers
the Violets and Daisies
Lilies and Lilians
and dozens more Floras all

Once in the South I met a woman
named Lila

Plants, flowers
all meant to serve
green leaves in passing
with names like eyebright
meadowsweet always helping
the proud and the meek
--Call me Hortensia!

Plants, how could we do
how could we be without you?
[Without you, how would I know?]
We are each other's breath

I prefer to be surrounded
by your colorful silence
and so do the fuchsia fox
the bumblebee, whippoorwill
the sheep in the meadow sleeping
and the black crow cackling up a tree

P. S. Planten un Blomen, meaning Plants and Flowers in Low or Platt German, is a famous Hamburg park.

Margaret Saine

CACTUS

On this lonely cactus
hope is a flower
the shock of a beauty
unforeseen

Beauty that makes
the heart skip a beat:
a leap of faith
into the world

Margaret Saine

AFTER THE MONSOON

3after the monsoon
light at sunrise is reborn
drops down outside the window
to shine like stars
the atoms of the universe
in green expansion
subtle shades of pink
sparsely sown
embroidered onto the world
before my eyes
like an apparition
for seconds
tiny birds
drink the drops
the foliage trembles slightly
das Blattwerk zittert leicht
and shakes itself off
drops appear
in a prism of light

the humble photo captures
difracts
the beauty of the universe
the ineffable tenderness
of a fragile moment:

our entrance into matter

FEATURED POET MARLENE HITT (1936-2024)

POEMS FROM *CLOCKS AND WATER DROPS* ISBN 978-0-9819693-5-0, April 2015

Clocks and Water Drops is the first full-length collection of poetry by Marlene Hitt, the first Poet Laureate of Sunland-Tujunga, a former Director at the Bolton Hall Museum, a local historian, poet, and community activist. The book of reflections about her life, family and neighborhood changing through the decades, includes 73 poems in sections dedicated to: Children, Marriages, Portraits, Neighbors, Seasons, Small Things, Passages, and Farewells. The title captures the poet's fascination with the flow of time, as relentless and powerful as drops of water that can shape rocks and move mountains. Poet Jack Cooper praises Hitt's "astute and thoughtful voice" while Kath Abela Wilson admires her "confident and consistent phrasing, and exacting vision."

TREASURE

Here it is once again, way back in the closet,
the box of treasures collected by children.
Feathers, one huge and black from a crow,
one tiny from Felicia the finch.
And stones:
My mother's rock from the quarry
that inspired a song "Rock of Ages,"
New Zealand jade, a rounded pebble
from the Dead Sea.
This is where my penny went,
the one I wore in my shoe at our wedding
and the cigar, still wrapped,
from when our son was born.
Keys, shaped for castle doors, for valises,
for piggy banks and diaries. Keys lost,
found far too late for any locks.
I remember the dandelions blown in the wind
and this one glued to a paper plate, imprisoned,
never to blossom and this Saskatchewan wheat
pulled up by Uncle Alf when he stopped the truck
to find a souvenir that last evening.
And this one magnificent marble!
What is not a treasure?
What can be tossed away?

Marlene Hitt

LOVE MENDED

That old threadbare word – love
flows in a fabric patterned
with shades of crimson colors,
whispers of mauve and the yellow of dry sun.
Chopin wove love into the air,
Monet stroked it onto canvas.

That word so often patched
nearly falls apart, its meaning frayed –
until a newborn cries
or a daughter becomes a bride,
until the lace of fifty years together
fully knits. Love unravels
until a friend perceives and cherishes,
until there is an ear ready to listen,
a shoulder to cry on. Love is repaired
with the consecration of all the threads.

Then, there is delight in love's stitching,
the worn word renewed
into the One Love.
Mended.

Marlene Hitt

MOTHER'S DAY

Mint leaves from her garden,
baby carrots, snap peas,
red-ripe tomatoes and apricots...
As with paint pots before canvas
and her hands the brushes,
she arranges the color of the meal.
Monet's gardens stay for centuries,
hers are devoured in an hour,
live only in memory. Meals:
potatoes sprinkled with parsley,
lamb with Asian pear and kiwi salsa,
chipotle glazed apples,

chicken orecchiette soup

with lemon grass and cilantro,
vanilla bean soufflés,
flour pudding, corn pones
with butter and syrup.
Her hands fashion
bok choy cooked crisp-tender,
haggis and ale, oatcakes and mutton.
A treat of strawberry ice cream,
grilled cheese, chocolate milk.
Mother.
Warm bread, the morning's cream,
corn cob jelly, French toast.
Acorn mush, piki, and a sprig of sage.
The maker of fine art.
My mother.

Marlene Hitt

POEMS FROM *YELLOW TREE ALONE* (2022) Marlene Hitt's second full-size poetry volume, that includes 129 poems written between 1998 and 2022. These poems bring together the fruit of a lifetime of wisdom and creativity. Some poems are reprinted from earlier publications; the poet's favorites have appeared in print several times. Others are either new or have never been published. The poems were selected by Marlene Hitt, Alice Pero and Maja Trochimczyk from Marlene's vast output of well-crafted and insightful verse. https://moonrisepress.com/hitt---yellow-tree-alone.html#/

I WONDER

I wonder what joy is
And where is death.

I wonder about the newborn babe
And its one and only breath.

I wonder where love goes
When it steals away,

And the place where the years go
Day by day.

RIPPLES

In my room I smell a cigar though no one smokes;
outside, ripples cover a still, clear pond
I know something makes those creaks
and passes beside my face, just out of sight.
That is the way of ghosts — a presence gone
from the water, from the room, my dad
smoking his cigar somewhere. Not here.

Marlene Hitt

REVERIES

Enchanted
are the cottonwoods
Haunted
with the sound of a breeze
Magic
are the river rocks
Charmed
I am in my reverie
I wish
that I could ever be
Content
as flowers in the field
United
as the grass and trees
Captured
as to peace I yield *Marlene Hitt*

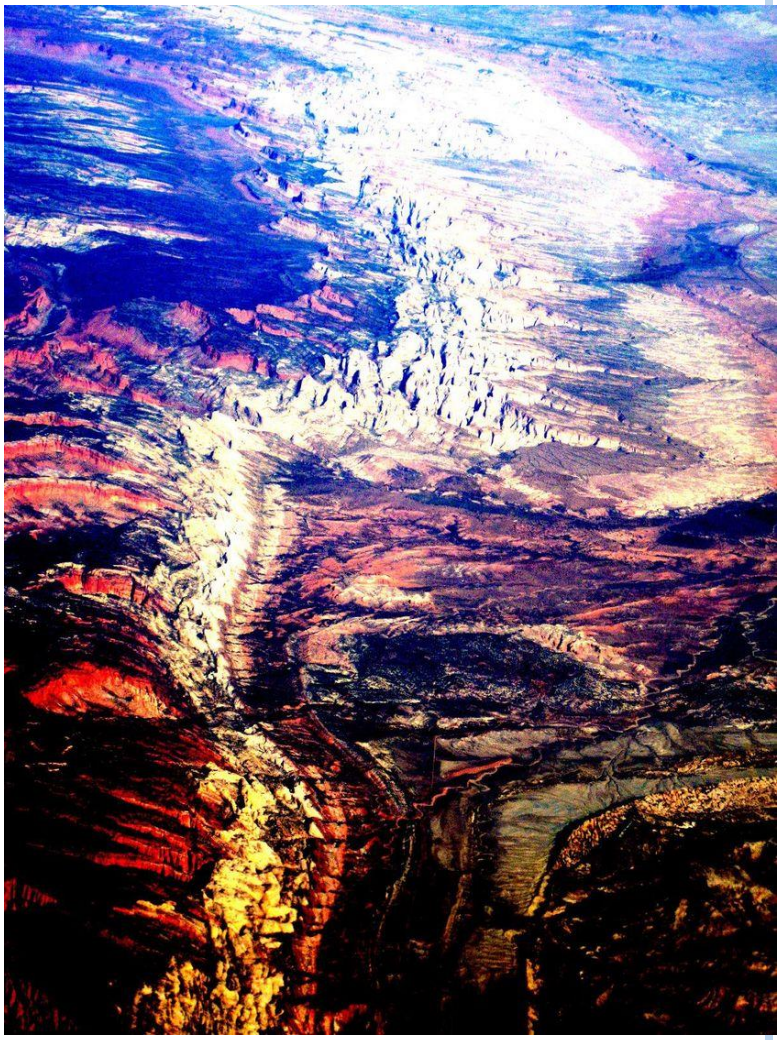
WHAT COULD YOU DO WITH A BUBBLE?

A child could see a rainbow in it,
A frog could be born.
Time could do something
Really special.
Waterbug could do his
Hunting, free to breathe,
While old men sit still to
Ponder its beauty.
A scientist could measure it,
Probing its mystery.
What could I do with a bubble?
I could watch it.
That would be enough.

YELLOW TREE ALONE

Yellow tree
Stands glowing
In sideways light
Regal and glorious
Her beauty
Her message
For life's meaning
Wasted
With no one
To see that golden
Radiance
She sings
To no one
Who'd hear her
But to the Sun, Ra
The Giver of Gold *Marlene Hitt*

BEAUTY AT THE BARRE



Small cloud of rosin dust
Around the battered wooden box
Rises beauty from hellish pain
A half-used roll of KT tape
Contains the inflamed hamstring
Cracking calluses, the only shield
For a bloody sock
Blisters ripped of skin
Plié - tendu
Plié - tendu
From 5:00 am until the school bell rings

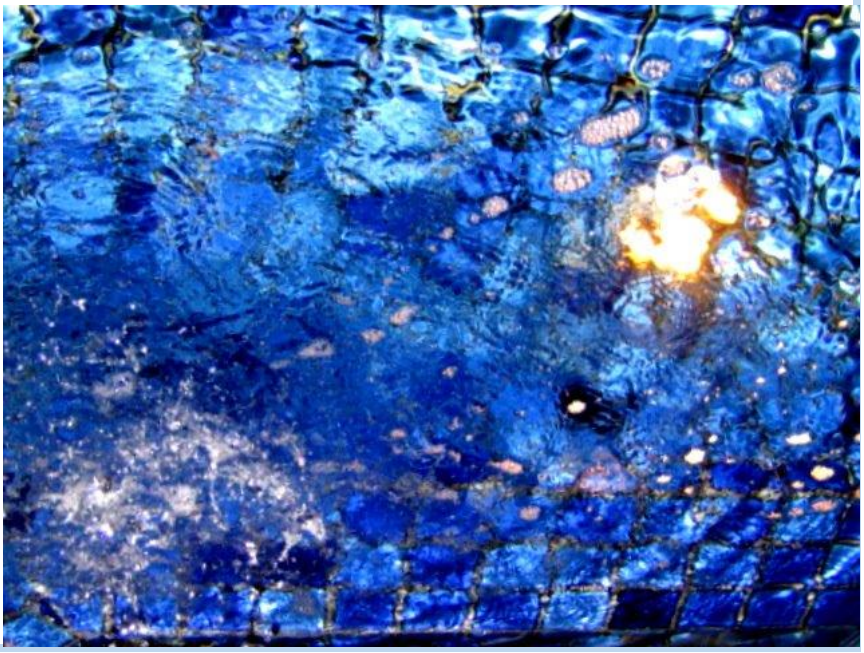
Torment to the limbs
Aching, soreness, spasms, cramps
Tedium at the barre building
Strength, alignment, balance, beauty
Relevé - en pointe
Relevé - en pointe

Body dysmorphia, eating disorders
Stay thin, stay thin
Keep your fingers from your throat
Need it be this ugly
To reach the height of grace?

The x-rays say you're ready
Determination leads the charge
Bind reptilian feet
In satin covered toe shoes

Sauté - en pointe
6 inches of elegance
The added line from hip to toe
16 years of training
For the Black Swan pas de deux

Joe DeCenzo



Mountains, 23 May 2023
Water Patterns, 22 February 2024
Photos by Margaret Saine

FEATURED POET RICHARD M. DEETS

WE SAILED ON WITH HAPPY HEARTS

The Harbor wind's song played on in our hearts
As we bobbed in our baby dinghy in the blue bay.
All morning long we sailed on with happy hearts.

Sporadic clouds peeled shadows off dockhand carts:
We thrilled in trills of gulls and terns above the bay.
The harbor wind's song played on in our hearts.

We were skippers of our dinghy, sporting our parts.
Tack port! No, starboard! Buoy, port side bow! Oy vey!
All sea sun long we sailed on with happy hearts.

Cool breezes blew our dinghy to coves across the charts;
We sifted winded sails, sipped wine all winsome day.
The harbor wind's song played on in our hearts.

The sun tumbled: we tacked for clubs past marts
And feasted on mariners' tales of a bygone day.
All evening long we sailed on with happy hearts.

We revelled in rhythmic peals of mast slapping halyards
And lapping ripples mooring mirrored lights in the bay.
The harbor wind's song played on in our hearts;
All misted moon long we sailed on with happy hearts.

Richard M. Deets

BLUE VIOLETS

Spring springs, seedlings struggle seeking
Blossoms, hearts enchained in frozen soil
From long-mooned January snow storms.

Assured of their entry on life's stage
As if from some distant memory,
They are disdainful of hesitancies.

Enveloped within fragile blue rhapsodies
Of heavenly petals, they fear
Nothing, blissful at their core.

Perfumed goddesses, beautiful ones,
Unfurling petals in morning sunlight,
Clutching life abound, spirits shining,

Theirs is that once more vindicated faith
That fragile life fearlessly unfolds
Each splendid spring in blue violets.

Richard M. Deets, Dubin, California
"We Sailed on"...appeared on Poem Hunter site.
https://www.poemhunter.com/

Photo by Margaret Saine, 13 June 2024

CHRISTINA'S COURAGE

—a piece of poetry relating to disability.

We were in Chadds Ford and talked of Wyeth art,
Timeless as Brandywine Valley landscapes.
We weighed the mystery of Christina's courage
Rising above the crippling curse of polio.

Mid-March chills encroached upon the evening hour.
Then the wind battered shutters and bent
Daffodils and chickweed, and rain
Splashed the riverward windows. We romanticized ourselves

With memories as children bicycling winding country roads
Over rolling hills dropping into sleepy valleys,
Your flaming auburn hair was always beyond reach.
Suddenly rain showers slowed to a quiet drizzle.

The only sound - a cardinal striking the casement window.
I stood in the cottage entry drying forearm crutches,
and turned to see you drooping in your wheelchair, staring stainless
Braces stacked in night shadows as if searching for the child

Paralysis free, I watched a tear round your pale cheek, and fall.
And what of the spring day remained? A Norfolk Southern freight
Whistle faded northward and the courage of Christina,
Which we had discussed, appeared out of reach in the rain.

Richard M. Deets
Published: 2012/03/15
www.disabled-world.com/communication/poetry/christinas-courage.php

LOVE

love is nature's threads
embroidered in children, stitch
by stitch by a mother.

Haiku for Mother's Day by Richard M. Deets

RICHARD M. DEETS

After a career as a mathematics teacher, Richard Deets became the Vice President, Membership of the CSPS in the fall of 2012. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Livermore Valley Opera and the City of Dublin's Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission. His poems have appeared online in a variety of milieus. Richard's published articles on poetry include The Elements of Poetry online at FamilyFriendPoems.com. One of his poems published on the same site became a wedding favourite, as he stated, "*I wrote the poem, 'Our Dreams,' as a Valentine gift for my wife. Since that time, over a hundred brides have requested permission to include the poem in their wedding ceremonies. My wife has given me permission to say yes to every bride.*"

https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/a-valentine-poem

ANDRZEJ TARGOWSKI REVIEWS *ALCHEMY OF WORDS* BY ELLA CZAJKOWSKA

Alchemy of Words by Ella Czajkowska. Moonrise Press, 2024. 70 poems, 98 pages.
ISBN 978-1-945938-80-1 https://moonrisepress.com/czajkowska---alchemy-of-words.html#/

Alchemy of Words by Ella Czajkowska is a poetic exploration of self, love, nature, and the philosophical intricacies of existence. This collection, created by a young poet from Los Angeles, unfolds with an intensity that mirrors a journey of self-discovery, vulnerability, and resilience.

Ella's writing shines with vivid imagery and lyrical language, which transforms abstract concepts into striking mental landscapes. The collection opens with the poem "He, Who Watches," a piece rich in Gothic sensibilities, where the poet's introspective lens reflects themes of darkness and revelation. This introspective style continues throughout, as in "The Balance," where Ella navigates the delicate equilibrium of life's opposing forces, offering reflections that are poignant and contemplative.

One of the most compelling aspects of this collection is Ella's use of nature as both a metaphor and a muse. Poems like "Beauty" and "Lady of the Gardens" breathe life into familiar natural imagery, which she renders as both delicate and fiercely resilient. Her keen observation and introspection in these works echoed an almost meditative engagement with the world around her.

In addition to the richness of her themes, Czajkowska's style is versatile, shifting seamlessly from haunting, mystical verses to sharply introspective reflections. Her language is direct yet lush, demanding the reader's attention and pulling them into each emotional landscape. The recurring imagery of shadows, silence, and distant dreams lends a cohesive, almost hypnotic quality to her work,

revealing her fascination with what lies beneath the surface.

Alchemy of Words is a testament to the author's profound understanding of the nuances of human experience, capturing the ephemeral and eternal aspects of existence in a way that resonates deeply. This collection not only introduces Ella Czajkowska as a promising young poet but also as a voice capable of articulating the often-unspoken complexities of the human soul.

Andrew Targowski
Professor Emeritus, Western Michigan University
andrew.targowski@wmich.edu

ALCHEMY OF WORDS

Precarious road ahead, a path through forest old and dark,
Of hands made, reaching, grasping, painted both in shade and light.
Earth frostbitten deeply so—to bone, to ash, core, and soul—
Where empty glade in center lies concealed by dust of time,
There buried gently shall be all the hopes in barren soil,
And by loving hand's caress nourished, songs of grief, of joy,
And stories told—true, untrue—of nation's birth, life, and death;
Unknown remain to unknowing, who sleep beyond iron walls.

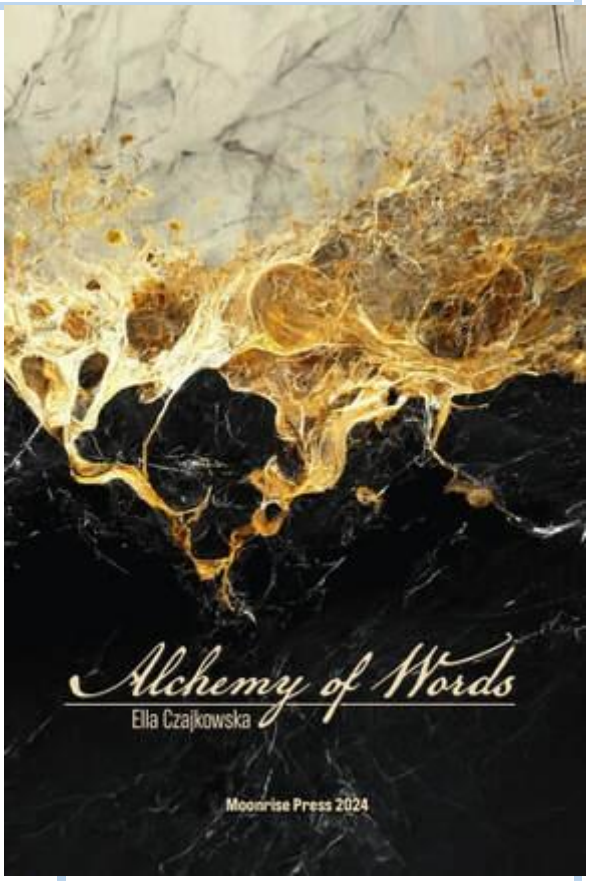
An Alchemy of Words, arcane, a secret and a spell,
That transform would hearts to stone, to liquid gold speech distill,
And as a feast above all feasts present on gilt platters,
Unreachable, untouchable, for none can hope to be
Fed on diet of empty vows and lukewarm, idle smiles.
At table high a stranger sits, silent, full and drunken
On devoured words from gifted mouths, taken sip by sip,
Till the brilliance fades and, for their lack, of thirst comes to die.

This blood a river is, that boils in hearts made marble hard,
This spirit a memory of light to shadow-self dimmed,
By centuries of history untold, destroyed or shamed;
By whispers of ancestors gone, unknown, unnamed, unmourned;
By those who chose a mask to wear in colors of deceit,
And peddle lies and name them truth, and silence all who speak,
In defiance stand against all those who violence love and preach,
And mockery would carry as a weapon of their choice.

(At home, that is no home at all, a memory prevails:
"This will shatter, this will perish, this will hold, this will keep".)

Have you mouth? Then sigh.
Have you words? Then cry,
to heavens scream:

"I mustn't stop, I must see, in this universe of you
And me, this shall hold, this I keep, I must see, I must see!
And where I stand there I live; and where I stand there I die,
And buried in one grave with truth as friend I wish to lie.
And I would pry my eyes wide open, by force if so must be,
Witness more of human nature, and the marching time observe:
Yesterday, today, tomorrow, in a single line aligned."



THE SUBLIME SENSES

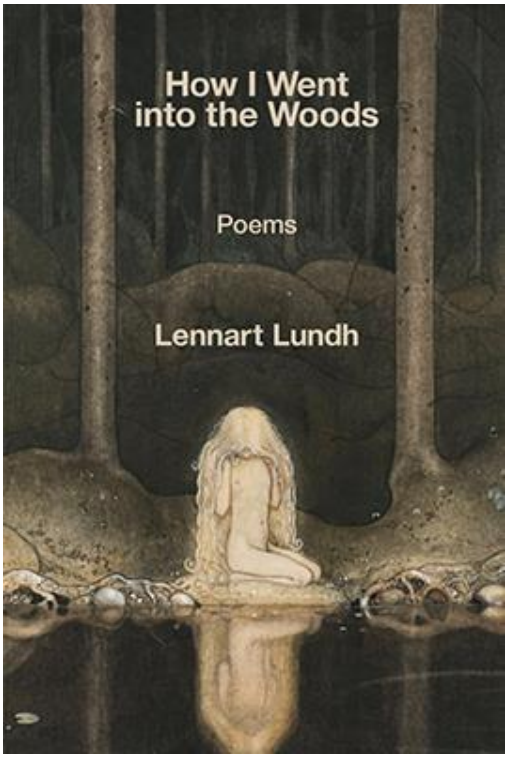
Until the heart stops
it desires;
until the mind stills
it aspires;

until the senses
take their leave
they deceive
such dreams they weave…

Ella Czajkowska

MICHAEL ESCOUBAS REVIEWS *HOW I WENT INTO THE WOODS* BY LENNART LUNDH

How I Went into the Woods: Poems by Lennart Lundh. Kelsay Books, 70 Poems ~ 89 pages.
ISBN #: 978-1-63980-485-6. https://kelsaybooks.com/products/how-i-went-into-the-woods



As if the title of Lennart Lundh's ekphrastic collection isn't enough to capture one's attention, consider the cover image: it is John Bauer's *Princess Tuvstarr Gazing Down into the Dark Waters of the Forest Tarn* (1913). Bauer's painting is "evocative," "mysterious," and open to immense "speculation." Each of these elements provides a creative banquet for Lundh in his latest collection *How I Went into the Woods.*

Layout and Style

There are no images in the book. Most poems reside on a single page with the artist's accreditation placed at the bottom of the page. Lundh draws inspiration from diverse sources: I counted thirty paintings, over twenty photographs, and a variety of drawings, posters, film shorts, a statue by Franco Vianello, even fragments of newspaper articles from 1971 editions of the *Chicago Tribune.* All of these find their way into a collection that offers something new with every turn of the page. Googling the referenced art, lingering with it, then returning to its corresponding poem gave me a satisfying read.

Stylistically, Lundh is a free verse poet. His eye for details and his skill at arranging them into tight narrative flows is superior.

Exhibits

The digital work *Summer Day*, by Christian Schloe, a study in surreal art, led to this poem by the same name:

Garbed in gentle shades
of beech bark and lilac,
she sits on sturdy privets.

Her cheeks are sun-kissed.
Breezes weave dark hair.
The clouds hold no rain.

A curious bird observes
the platter's rotation
on the old gramophone.

The sound they hear
is the ancient song
of flowers praising light.

Note how scene and word become a unified whole.

Who would think that an old scrap of newspaper could lead to poetry? It does. "More Mysterious," gives the fragment a human voice:

Being a scrap of newspaper found in a library book.
Will anyone knowing the full story please get in touch.

The poem depicts the impossible-to-determine meaning from the fragment. Indeed, I was left wondering about the fragment's flesh-and-blood people. Who were they? What became of them? Were they mere fragments, too?

"The Bride," based on a painting by abstract pioneer Wassily Kandinsky, begins:

> She sits alone in her wedding gown.

Through the device of irony, the poem, in successive stanzas of couplet, tercet, and quatrain describes the bride, who now sits alone, unsure of where her husband is, or if or how he will return. Nevertheless,

> She sits alone with all the possibilities.

Thinking about Subjects and Titles

Lennart Lundh's subject range is of special interest to me, as is his choice of title. In preparing this review, I spent hours scratching my head, trying to figure out what is meant by *How I Went into the Woods*. Authors frequently offer a "title poem" which serves as an umbrella for the whole collection. Nothing here. About his cosmopolitan range of interests: I am thinking that this is a poet's work that shows a heart for people, for their sufferings, their backstories.

Just as the bride in Wassily Kandinsky's abstract painting, "sits alone with all the possibilities," so, I conjure Lennart Lundh exploring, through his poetry, the "woods" that represent the full range of life experiences. These weigh heavy on his heart.

In "Lady in the White Business Suit," the poet draws from a broadside poster seen in a post office at Long Beach. The poster lays bare attitudes often held by professing Christians:

> Listen, Christian: I was homeless,
> and you preached to me about the
> Spiritual Shelter of the love of God.

The poem is in the voice of the coffee shop owner:

> She was a lovely woman, not just in body
> but in spirit. One of my favorites, each day
> stopping for the Journal and a coffee, black,
> please. How's your day? Thanks. See you tomorrow.
>
> Happy, successful. Well dressed and light perfume.
> And then she was wearing the same outfit two,
> three days in a week, with shoes looking worn and
> a whiff of alcohol instead of Parisian citrus.
>
> Passing on the Journal, spending hours at a time
> in a chair in the café, drinking water, staring far,
> far outside the window at her old skyline. Finally,
> blushing when I brought her coffee, Lost my damned job.
>
> After that, she came by once or twice more. Stayed out
> on the sidewalk, caging money and cigarettes. Sleeping
> in the park with one eye open through the summer, on
> into winter, when they found her asleep forever.

How I Went into the Woods will stand the test of time because it is about life . . . life, with all its possibilities.

~ Michael Escoubas

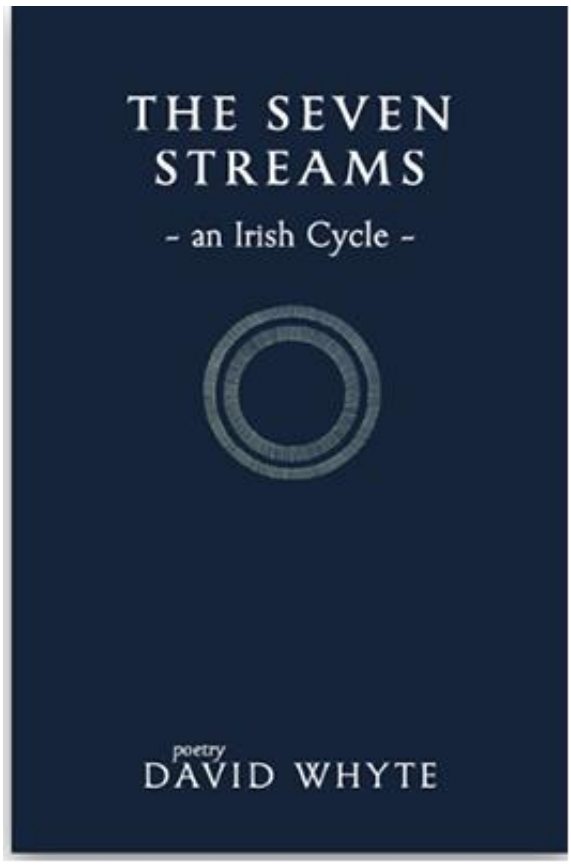
MICHAEL ESCOUBAS REVIEWS *THE SEVEN STREAMS: AN IRISH CYCLE* BY DAVID WHYTE

The Seven Streams: An Irish Cycle by David Whyte. Many Rivers Press, 59 poems ~ 167 pages.
ISBN #: 978-1-932887-57-0. davidwhyte.com/collections/books/products/the-seven-streams

In commenting on David Whyte's *The Steven Streams: An Irish Cycle*, Pat Conroy, author of The Prince of Tides, writes: "In this collection, David Whyte's poetry becomes a hand held out as if to say, 'Life is a path we both can share; let's take a walk beside the sea.' Note to the intrepid reader: If you walk with David Whyte, you risk changing your life; you risk becoming more than you might imagine."

The Seven Streams is portioned out in eight headings: I. Return, II. Griefs, III. Pilgrim, IV. Islands, V. Thresholds, VI. Mother, VII. Mythic, and VIII. John. Each has its own unique emphasis; each contributes to Whyte's cycle of life.

Among the many poems that spoke to my inner-spirit, "Coleman's Bed" (III. Pilgrim), swept me into a Stream of Contemplation:



> Find that far inward symmetry
> to all outward appearances, apprentice
> yourself to yourself, begin to welcome back
> all you sent away, be a new annunciation,
> make yourself a door through which
> to be hospitable, even to the stranger in you.

The poem continues with gentle language about giving oneself over to becoming a child again, to listening with attuned attention to rain falling, to birds singing, being conscious of "each falling leaf." The world, within its natural tendencies, became for me, unspoken prayers:

> Above all, be alone with it all,
> a hiving off, a corner of silence
> amidst the noise, refuse to talk,
> even to yourself, and stay in this place
> until the current of the story
> is strong enough to float you out.

By the end of the poem's 70 lines, I felt reborn. I felt empowered to: "walk on, broader and cleansed / for having imagined."

While the poet has assembled an Irish Cycle, I found myself challenged to apply the collection's emphasis on streams and cycles to my personal context.

In RETURN, I am on a plane and catch a vision of "an old man walking on the wet road." Whyte's detailed description, "He has a stick, a hat, old shoes, / a gait that says he will walk forever." The poem "What it means to be Free," captures freedom, in such simple things. I want to reexamine my priorities in view of Whyte's Stream of Simplicity.

From GRIEF, Whyte's Elegy for the late Mícháel Ó Súilleabháin, I found a Stream of Appreciation for a dear friend. In a touching retrospective, the poet sees and hears Michael's music . . . the music of his life. It visits him in "The Music of the Morning Sun."

The set of four poems from ISLANDS calls forth, in me, a Stream of Self-Renewal. Where " you realized—part of you / had already dropped to its knees, / to pray, to sing, to look—to fall in love with everything / and everyone again, . . ." These poems have the "feel" of journey, of hard-fought victory, a return from exile. I emerge knowing where I need to be.

In her book, *Open House for Butterflies*, Ruth Krauss writes, Everybody should be quiet near a little stream and listen. This wise saying seems a perfect fit. David Whyte writes about "streams" that flow, meet, and cleanse, baptizing one into the recovery of life.

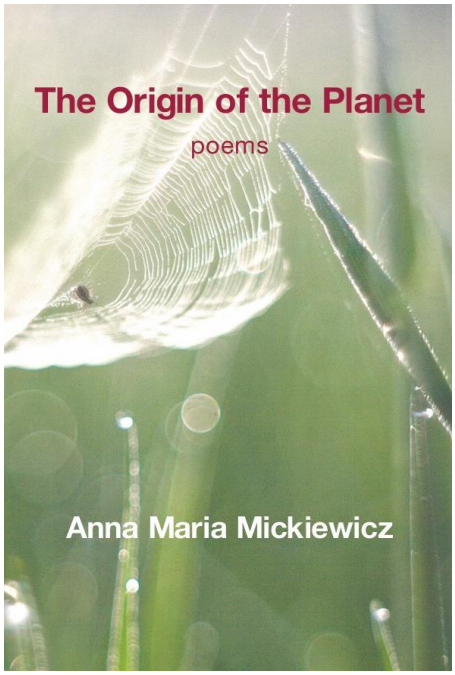
At the outset, this reviewer cautioned the "intrepid" reader that there are risks involved. Taste and see, perhaps, you too, will pray:

> I thank you light, for the subtle way
> your merest touch gives shape
> to such things I could
> only learn to love . . .

~ Michael Escoubas

AMELIA SERRALLER CALVO REVIEWS *THE ORIGIN OF THE PLANET* BY ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ

The Origin of the Planet by Anna Maria Mickiewicz. 64 pages. Kelsay Books, (2024), ISBN-13: 978-1639806515



The Origin of the Planet is a vibrant collection of poems by Polish writer Anna Maria Mickiewicz, recently published in 2024 by Kelsay Books. It consists of 51 masterful poems, with a foreword from Anthony Smith. Apart from being a poet, Anna Maria Mickiewicz is a London-based narrator, correspondent and editor, who writes in both Polish and English. Carrying the surname of the most prestigious Romantic Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, it seems that Anna Maria was somehow predestined to write. In particular, she has the following books to her credit: *Okruchy z Okrągłego Stołu (Breadcrumbs from the Round Table,* 2000), verse collection Proscenium, published by Poetry Space after the Polish edition in 2014, and *The Mystery of Time* (Flutter Press, 2019). Anna Maria has also published an anthology with Danuta Błaszak, *Flying Between Words*, devoted to Polish contemporary writers (Florida: 2015).

The author first moved to California, and then to London, where she has been living for very many years. Mickiewicz edits the annual literary magazine *Pamiętnik Literacki* ("The Literary Memoir") in London, as well as the American journal *Contemporary Writers of Poland*, and is a member of both the English and the Polish PEN Clubs.

Among other recognitions, the poet won the Miasto Literatów (The City of Writers) Author of the Year award in 2013. In addition, she has been honoured with the Polish *Gloria Artis* medal for Merit to Culture, and with the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity.

One of the virtues of this collection of poems is its ability to reflect both sides of reality. Thus, the poem that opens and titles the anthology, "The Origin of the Planet," speaks fundamentally of a dystopian future, which clashes head-on with the genesis of our planet. However, these are not alarmist verses, but rather subtly vindictive and stoic, with a hopeful ending.

In fact, one of the unmistakable traits of good poetry is that there is no room for the author's victimhood. Otherwise, the verses would lack the richness conferred by polysemy and would lose scope and intensity. This is not the case with Anna Maria Mickiewicz, who in this book quickly transports us to California, one of her places of residence. With the force of nature as a link between her opening poems, the poet now intones a song of hope, about a couple starting a new life.

The journey continues, both in time and space. The next destination is Cornwall, where the roar of the ocean brings reminiscences of the myth of Tristan and Isolde, echoes of the old Portuguese galleons that give the poem a romantic dimension which, surprisingly, combines magnificently with lightness and lipstick.

In the Polish author's poetry, there is room for mythological, literary references (e.g. to her compatriot, the brilliant writer Joseph Conrad, who not surprisingly also wrote in English) and philosophical reflections. Through wit and humour, the poet achieves a wonderful balance between transcendence and quotidianity.

Mickiewicz integrates poems of classical inspiration (Socrates is the great reference point for the poet), with more mundane and contemporary themes, such as the pandemic or the rush that prevails in our society. *The Origin of the Planet* combines transversality with a taste for detail, philosophy with poetry, the eternal with the mundane. This difficult balance evokes the wake of the poetic saga *Pan Cogito* by the Polish master Zbigniew Herbert. There is a touch of classicism in both authors that translates into great harmony and cohesion between all their poems. The book in question also shows an incipient taste for visual poetry from Anna Maria Mickiewicz.

In short, these are poems in free verse with a cadence generated from enumerations, parallelisms and anaphoras, direct verses that grow like the rising tide and then gather in an essential idea as the poem closes.

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CALIFORNIA STATE POETRY SOCIETY

Established in 1971, CSPS is the official state organization representing California to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS). CSPS was incorporated on August 14th, 1985 as a 501(c)(3) organization, so donations above the membership level are tax deductible. Donor and patron support ensure that (1) the quality publications of the CSPS continue and (2) our promotion of poetry and art in California and around the world thrives and expands. Information regarding renewal and patron contributions is on the Membership page of our website (.org). The CSPS began publication of the *California Quarterly* in the fall of 1972. The *California Quarterly,* published four times a year, accepts only unpublished poetry and no simultaneous submissions are allowed. Foreign language poems with an English translation are welcome. Submissions may be made through Submittable.com, via email, website, or even mail (by those without access to the internet and email addresses).

www.californiastatepoetrysociety.org (website) | www.californiastatepoetrysociety.com (blog)

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2007 Fall Flight Salerno, photo by Margaret Saine

MONTHLY CONTEST SUBMISSONS 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 CSPS. 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 three ways to submit.

(1) by regular mail (enclosing check) or email (using PayPal):
CSPS Monthly Contest – (Specify Contest Month). Post Office Box 4288, Sunland, CA 91041

(2) online on our website CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.org (you must register and create a profile with a password first, then the option to submit poems and fees will open), or

(3) by email, using PayPal and email, to the email address cited below, or to:
CSPSMonthlyContests@gmail.com (specify the month) and pay your fees by PayPal to the following account: 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 CSPS Newsbriefs and published in the first Poetry Letter of the following year. Prize-winning poems are also posted on the blog, CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.com. The 1st prize winner receives half of the prize pool for pools less than $100. Please note: **Do not send SAEs**. We do not return poems. If you win, we will let you know. Otherwise, there are no notifications.

CSPS 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; ⑦July: 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).

Monsoon, Photo by Margaret Saine