“There is a final tale to be told, even if there is a reprieve for the teller of the tales and these poems, but how can we know which one it will be, and hence, each tale, each poem carries that wait and weight of finality, making the poems shine brighter and harder in the readers’ eyes. It’s all there in the opening lines of the first poem, “Quang PhD,” where the city’s name Saigon is divided into syllables: “Sai” and “gon,” where “Sai” is the ashes of beating wings and “gon” is the deeper truth, the goneness of the past, of a life lived there, and the unfathomable flight of experience, the parchment on which Quang’s PhD is written. And so the poems in Boyd Bauman’s excellent book, *Scheherazade Plays the Chestnut Tree Cafe*, become the tales that save us for another day and push us into the day after that, for ‘Poets are forged/simply by bearing witness.’ And Boyd Bauman bares a sharp-edged and exuberant witness for all of us, never forgetting to open us along the way to a poignant and sardonic sense of humor. Bauman is our American Scheherazade.”

* Walter Bargen, first poet laureate of Missouri and author of *My Other Mother's Red Mercedes*

“An old cliché talks about how a reader does not need to leave her/his chair to travel the world. In his collection of poetry *Scheherazade Plays the Chestnut Tree Cafe*, Boyd Bauman’s poems convert the chair into a TARDIS to whisk us away into his examinations of world travels. Alongside these, Bauman shows us his rural Kansas upbringing, too, and the times of unknowing in the midst of organized religion and ranch-talk. He lends a lens to the racism of that childhood world: ‘though we didn’t have a clue / who a queer was / and what would a black man / want with a town like ours…’ Through these complications examined in this work, we get to see the worlds we know, the worlds that need revealed, and the worlds we haven’t visited but understand what we do is to survive, just as Bauman shares with us through looking at Iceland’s poet Egil: ‘Poets are forged / simply by bearing witness / to the nature of this land, / this land of temper / and skáld (other poets).’”

* Dennis Etzel, Jr., author of *This Removed Utopia*

“Here is work by a poet who writes with intelligence, understanding and remarkable wisdom, a gift that makes his poetry a joy to read. He reaches into his past to share indelible memories of a life spent in rural Kansas and much of the rest of the world. His tough and pertinent evaluation of religious life in America is spot-on—folks who have created a god in their own image. His tendency to formalism is delightful. Here’s just a sample. There are so many more. Bauman’s poem, “Stockyards” morphs into an ode near the end: ‘Oh, Chicago/hog butcher of the world,/ has your past dissolved like my memory . . . ?’ And in the poem, “Communion”, a well-deserved jab at athletes and sports fans who actually believe that God cares who wins a competition: ‘not only the one true path to His Kingdom, /but also define right to victory /in the sanctuary of home court.”

* H.C. Palmer, 2017 Balcones Poetry Prize finalist and Kansas Notable Book Award winner for *Feet of the Messenger*