

THE SEVENTH QUARRY



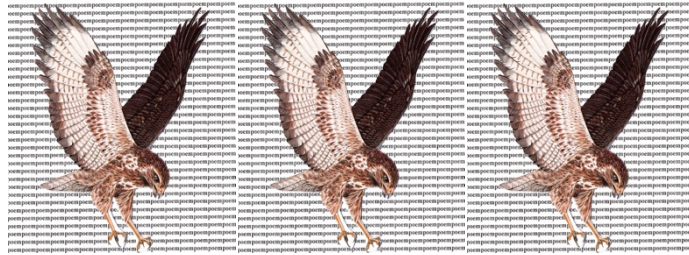
POETRY

ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN

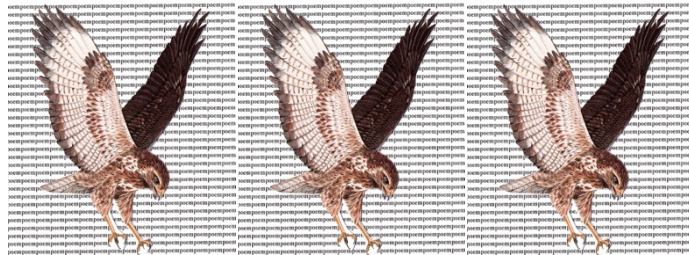
WINTER/SPRING 2018

SWANSEA POETRY MAGAZINE

THE



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ISSUE 27
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**EDITORIAL
ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN
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This twenty-seventh issue features work from America, Canada, England, France, India, Israel, Italy, Poland, Scotland, and Wales. It also includes interviews with American poet Kevin Carey and Greek-Canadian poet Manolis (Emmanuel Aligizakis), who is one of the most prolific writers of the Greek diaspora, and a conversation with Nancy Donahoe, an American philanthropist, conducted by Miriam Margala.

The collaboration between The Seventh Quarry Press and Stanley H. Barkan's Cross-Cultural Communications, New York, continues into 2018.

Many thanks to the contributors for their poems and to subscribers for their support. An extra thank you to Vince Clemente, a State University New York English Professor Emeritus, for being Consultant Editor for THE SEVENTH QUARRY in America.

Special thanks to Stanley H. Barkan for allowing me to use the lines from his poem *Morning Poet*, from his book UNDER THE APPLE TREE, on the back cover.

Peter Thabit Jones, Editor

Consultant Editor, America: Vince Clemente

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Please enclose a s.a.e. with submissions of no more than FOUR poems
Poets beyond Great Britain must enclose an envelope with International Reply
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PETER THABIT JONES
(photo © 2018 Peter Thabit Jones)



VINCE CLEMENTE
(photo © 2018 Peter Thabit Jones)

This issue is in memory of Theofil Halama, poet and educator, 1932-2017

Theofil Halama, poet and educator, was born in Mistřovice, near Český Těšín, Czech Republic. He graduated from the School of Philosophy, Masaryk University, Brno, with a degree in German and Czech Language and Literature. He taught at the secondary level in the Ostravě region. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he went into exile, traveling the world.

From Italy, he emigrated to the USA. Beginning in 1973, he held teaching positions at the University of Houston, Rice University, and the Defense Language Institute. After the Czech Velvet Revolution in 1989, his poems and short stories were again published in Prague, Brno, and other Eastern European cities.

Since then, Theo's poems have appeared in poetry anthologies world-wide. He also published nearly twenty books of poetry in English, Czech, and bilingual editions, in the US—by Stanley Barkan, Cross-Cultural Communications (New York)—in the UK—by Peter Thabit Jones, The Seventh Quarry Press (Swansea, Wales)—and in the Czech Republic by various publishers.

Theo died in Monterey after extended illnesses. He is survived by his wife Anamarie, by his son Theofill Halama Jr., by his niece, Renáta Šternberk, musician of Ostravě, and other relatives in the Czech Republic and by marriage in the Philippines and elsewhere. His long-time co-translator, editor, illustrator and close family friend John Dotson states, "Theofil Halama's poems stand among the greatest world-poetry of his generation."



BOY IN THE FOG

September morning. Birds are still dreaming
about cornfields and gardens full of insects.
The promise of autumn smoke hangs in the air,
almost still now, but sometimes tremulous,
like an animal resting after a long run.
No sound breaks the mystery of the morning.
The fog glides from the river, fills the valley,
flows further, wraps meadows with a silent cloud
of a taste of brown seaweed and oak leaves.
It drapes low, covers the grass and herbs,
but a clump of young birches
sticks out above the volatile ocean.
The sun already rises, climbing rapidly,
loses the innocent colour of raspberries
to take on the lush eroticism of a ripe orange.
A boy walks, cutting with his legs passionate
fog tongues, around his fingers he winds
pieces of the cool wadding, from invisible flowers
of the late summer he throws down the dew drops. They fall down
making noise that wakes residents
of a small world – they do not know yet,
they do not even have a hunch,
that the jar in the boy's backpack
will become the destiny for some of them,
a train to extermination of small living creatures
gassed with ether and pierced with a pin
in a small Auschwitz of a child's room.

The cruelty leads him,
curiosity,
will of the discoverer of a universal law...

Tomasz Marek Sobieraj Poland

CATHEDRAL

I didn't have a penny for a ticket
to the temple.

So I sat down at the foot
of a petrified Jesus,
took out a knife and bread.

We watched the joyful pageants
coming out
of the cathedral.

And she slept,
under the eye of a soaring tower,
lofty and strong,
empty
beautiful form,
without God
nor believers.

Finale
of the cross
theatre
completed.

Tomasz Marek Sobieraj Poland

ANGELS

They choose
Stark room with
Wooden floors.

Bald rooms
Marked by time,
Stained by death.

They appear
Out of darkness,
Nebulous and blanched,

Summoned by moans,
Wordless prayers.
They smell of milk.

Natalie Crick England

AFTER SLEEP

After sleep
Your eyelids open and close
Like sunrise and sundown.

In this long curved room
Walls start to shimmer,
Breathe in rhyme.

Rose and charcoal dissolve to dove,
Reaching into the dark
For their colour,

Trees blackly jade,
Dripping with cones like
Jet suns.

This milky summer night
Dazed, smiling,
Lilies move into both of us.

Natalie Crick England

TULIPS

The Tulips have wilted.
Petals fall and light
Bends, grotesque,
Like a secret splayed open
At the seams of a wide
Black mouth.

The crowns remain lush,
A bouquet of teeth
Gleaming bright in a smile
As if to say:
“I am not dead yet.”

Natalie Crick England

BY THE LIGHT OF DAWN

Rains arrive.
Rivulet, replete with rusted dust,
Loose suitcases of storms.

The thin grey skim of sky
Breaks with a howl.
I am lost, without

The slow simmer of dawn, when
The sun rises red
And the crop comes in,

Deep and golden.
We wade into the burning lake
And we wait.

Natalie Crick England

BALANCE OF THINGS

The first time I ever knew the unsteadiness
of life, was on a train as a child.
the smooth rails and glide through

taken to being a rattling in the body
my drunk legs shaking, wobbling as
metal pressed metal in heavy breakage;

I was caught by surprise. The second time
was when I forked soil like a child
forking mash potato. I heaved up

with all I had, the clogs reluctant to
leave the skin of earth. my quadriceps
quivered as a crying lip.

and I knew then in life things always

Gareth Culshaw Wales

CONKERS

For some reason he's picking
up conkers again. Placing them
in a tub in the kitchen.

He is squirrelling, as his childhood
serves his adulthood. Stretching out
from the top of two decades of life.

Passport ready to be stamped
brochures with eye licking photos.
Thumbing brown shells that are

natures safes. Looking for the code
to open up a new growth, add a ring.
They sit like jewels, clean, shiney,

rubbed as a cricket ball upon the leg.
Waiting to explode new shoots,
spread new roots for him to follow.

I myself pick up a few.

Gareth Culshaw Wales

ERECTING STATUES

Davis demanded the liberty cap
be changed for a military helmet.

Freedom topped the Capitol in one-ton
sections hauled up by negro manpower
with on-site construction supervised by
black master metalworker, Philip Reid.

Liberty arose on Bedloe's Island,
a beacon to welcome the lost and found.

Neither the general public nor women
attended its prestigious opening
and for safety's sake since the First World War
nobody has been allowed near the torch.

John White England

FRANCISCO DE GOYA'S DARKNESS

Alone, without hope, he stares, blinks, squints, glares
into the comfortless middle distance.
On the walls of the Quinta del sordo
defiant records loom in the darkness
– only candles, or oil lamps, helped him
grope his way towards such final visions.

The light of Saturn is a flaming torch,
demanding we gaze into a gaping,
black hole of an all too inhuman maw.
The bland, blank, dank, black background affords us
no option of slipping off to the side.
A bloodied limb, stiff like a finger, points
our direction into the mouth of man.
Wild eyes seize us, preventing our escape,
draw us back, down toward an engorging,
to be held, and considered, and tasted,
reminding of Attenborough's contented,
languid, full-bellied, post-hunt chimpanzees.

After frantic, calculated pursuit
through heavily-canopied rainforest,
and off-camera quartering-induced screams,
there is the perfectly natural action
of the deep devouring of the raw flesh
of leg of colobus, the badgering
of bones and patient picking of entrails,
and a limb held aloft like Cain's cudgel.

John White England

WHITE WITCH

Fourteen years old, she laid some stinging curses,
one on the butcher's fat delivery boy
who'd praised her embryonic boobs.
Then, in her late spring's mellow autumn,
she fell in love with painting, idleness,
young men, the parties in Bohemia,
the politics of coffee bar ideals.

Was married briefly to a prince
of empires and the bank. Somehow
was never able to exult
in luxury cars, the bedroom suite,
left for uncertain seas.

In burgeoning years
she lived with honeysuckle, Oxfam shops,
charmed circle of admirers and friends,
her letters to The Guardian and The Times,
a yard of chickens, a blackcurrant bush,
fund raising walks (five K), sloe gin,
her landscapes and her handmade jewellery.
She delights, some midsummers' glimmering midnights,
in walking with a lover on the local mountains' peaks.

Robert Nisbet Wales

A COLD APRIL

It is a cold April, the month that moves my body most
And the buds are later than usual,
Oozing slow, in resurrection,
From sticky tombs.

I pick a bluebell – its sexy sap;
So subtle the scent, I crush and breathe.
There are white ones too and primroses
And a frenzy of garlic perfumes the air.

When I leave this place I shall remember
This very ardent force of green – its drive to bloom,
The shrewd contrivances, welcome of insects,
And urge for deft continuance of all the blatant forms.

How strange am I and fragile too, with inquisitive eyes,
Rootless legs and unpredictable restless brain,
Treading on all this forest humus;
Where springs life, naked in compulsion, disporting in rot.

Nor greater am I than this chewing bug,
Crawling ant shoving boulders, spiders that wreath trees,
Spore that rides the immanent wind,
Delightful birds that flutter and swoop and sing...

There is no better rich communion than this to share,
Nor bliss other to be found,
Unless it is – yes, see now –
This broken wall of very old stones trailing ivy:

Here, animals must come at night to pass,
Heedless of ancient boundaries,
Bent on their sure purposes,
Guided by urine and the stars.

Clive Donovan England

ON A DAY WHEN ROOKS FLY

On a day when rooks fly crowing in wind,
Adjusted sideways, knocked, and then back
And a creature is loose in the forest
But you do not know whether it is proper to hunt
And you do not know even how to stalk
Such a beast...

But in a clearing – as always, yes –
Lies a dying thing
With its message for you
It is ungracious to ignore.
You approach it to listen

And it speaks to you in language of crow
Which suddenly you understand
And in the sparkle of a wholesome, clear, brook,
The roar of oak-bough above
And the scent of juniper and bog myrtle;
All this, amidst the sculptural rocks of the clearing,
Bursts through like a long-lost acquaintance,

The recognition that I am weaponless
In a place of death I was drawn to
Which is much, much, closer and brighter
Than I thought. As I close my eyes
I sense the tremble of wing under skin,
The croak and floating flight of raven...

Clive Donovan England

THE OAK TREE

The heavy snow in March brought down the oak
and for some days white nothing could be seen,
as snow piled up on snow, the hillside flecked
with twigs and ivy's glossy bottle green.

But once we'd sawed it up, we knew its fate;
how heavy, large this tree had been although
it wasn't age at all but weight, the weight
of tons of snow on ivy'd felled it so.

A hundred years the tree had stood along
the footpath to the quarry, seen the homes
spring up and seen the trains with loaded stone
pull out for their last time, and many storms.

So now I watch it burn, just one year on,
commit to paper words, now that it's gone.

Simon Fletcher England

DIGITAL

Outside the new pavement café
the unshaven olive-skinned guy
worries lapis beads on a string.

Two tables along the student type
with raspberry hair is tapping away
on her mobile, uncertainly.

An old guy's scribbling in his diary;
I hear the sound of someone chopping
fruit or herbs, smell coriander?

Scratching words on my new tablet
I'm tempted to note or share some
post-modern cultural spiel

about how these new delights
reflect some progress in the brain,
or just to say they're very handy,

but being all fingers and thumbs
I log off, drain the *ristretto*,
wave down a taxi, take my leave.

Simon Fletcher England

SEA KALE

At what point
did you realise

you had it in you?
The moment after

you sent down
your questing root,

did not the sickness
set in? What feckless

chancing, pinning it all

on the blind proboscis.

No lateral back-up.

Surely, surely not.

I couldn't think like that,
you said, the sea twisting

in on itself –
I just had to know.

I just had to know
I would prevail.

C M Buckland England

THE LETTER

The man of silver hair licked the envelope
inundated with saliva and frost.
His lips where chapped and paper cut.
He pushed his thumbs against the edges
sealing it with a stamp.
The crinkled paper fitted in his coat pocket.
He put on green gloves and a captain's hat
pulling it down a bit, covering his glossy eyes.
His boots were pulled over his thin pants.
He grunted, "Humph!"
He stepped outside, the cold stung his nose.
He took out the withered letter
and placed it in the snow.
A young deer came with green-tinted eyes.
It took the letter in its small mouth
and left with a nod.
The man nodded in return.
He wrote letters to the doe,
the doe who was his only friend.

Natasha Rose Clarke America

KEVIN CAREY: POET OF PLACE



Kevin Carey© 2018 Kevin Carey

Kevin Carey is the author of three books of poetry: *The One Fifteen to Penn Station* (CavanKerry Press, 2012), *The Beach People* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014) and his most recent, *Jesus Was a Homeboy* (CavanKerry Press, 2016).

Carey is also a playwright and a documentary film maker. He teaches creative writing at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts, USA.

In addition to his teaching and writing, Carey is active in his community. He has coached 7th grade boys' basketball for 16 years. More recently, Carey has served as president and board member for the REAL program in Lynn MA. This non-profit after school program works to address literacy issues by providing books, homework assistance, healthy snacks and dinners, enrichment opportunities, college campus visits for children of all ages. It also provides parents with ESL

classes.

Is poetry important?

I can't really answer that question without stealing from New Jersey poet and teacher Maria Mazziotti Gillan. I remember her talking (and I'm paraphrasing here) about how poets have a responsibility to document the world for future generations. So in that way, poets are kind of historians as well as storytellers. I also think poetry teaches us all how to be concise writers and how to capture the impactful moments of our lives in a way that deserves special language. It also teaches how to be honest writers. For these reasons I think it's important.

Why do you write poetry?

Well, for the reasons above, but also because I can't stop thinking about myself, ha ha. The more I examine my life, past and present, the more it seems to come out in a poem. I hope my experience connects to others in a universal way but that's always the risk, right?

How does a poem begin for you?

There's no consistent pattern. Sometimes it's a person or a place I'm remembering. I'm a pretty narrative poet, so it's never just about the language but more about "something" happening, some connection to a story. It can be a line of dialogue, or an image, or a dream, but in most cases the first pieces of the poem are relating to some memory.

How do you know when a poem is “finished” (if it ever is)? Do you have an editing process?

I read my poems over and over again aloud, and I keep making changes with each reading. I suppose I'm always trying to make it right for my own voice. Often I imagine myself reading it to a room. I may show it to a fellow poet or workshop it in a writer's group. I think it's done (to a point) when I feel good about sending it out. Having said that, I've often made revisions after a poem has been rejected. Sending it out is the ultimate test I guess. In any case it's time that eventually decides what the finished poem will look like.

Do you have any creative routines or rituals to keep you writing even when you may not want to?

I'm fortunate to have a few different writing interests: poetry, fiction, stage plays,

and the filmmaking. So when one project seems to be stalling, I have the luxury of moving to the next one. I always have a few projects going and no shortage of ideas, just not enough time.

You teach creative writing at Salem State University. What do you tell your students about the role of poetry in their lives?

The most important thing I share with them is the same thing I tell my kids who are both artists. Once you have this thing, whether it's writing poetry, or making music or painting, you never have to give it back. It can be your way of processing the world. So when you have a bad day, or no matter what you are doing for work or what demands get put on you, you can always go there and make sense of the world through the art and the writing. That's the blessing. The curse is once you have the bug, you have to keep working at it. It won't let you go.

Film-making is also an area in which you excel. What attracted you to that medium?

As a kid I was a film buff. I loved stories that were told in that way. I started editing as a young man (many years ago!) 16mm short films with a friend of mine at Boston Film and Video. Then I did a little industrial work and soon after started making documentaries about local places. I also made a few short narrative pieces along the way. It's something I just kept doing when time and money allowed me to. Now I can't imagine not doing it.

How do you choose the subject for your films? Your two documentaries to date have focused on poets. Your 2012 documentary "All That Lies Between Us" showcased the life and poetry of New Jersey poet Maria Mazziotti Gillan. Your most recent "Unburying Malcolm Miller" focused on a rather obscure local poet of Salem, MA. How did you choose those two artists?

Maria has been an inspiration and a friend of mine for some time now. Making the film about her was a way of giving back to someone who has helped so many people, including me. Paying tribute to her was an easy decision. And like wise with this latest doc. Rod Kessler was a creative writing teacher of mine, and helped me during my Master's Program to understand writing in a new way. When he put together a reading of poems from Malcolm Miller, I was struck by the poetry and the stories being told by folks at that reading. It sort of fell in my lap and the fact that it was Rod's story as well as Malcom's made it even more attractive for me. An added pleasure has been being able to work with two fellow MFA classmates

on these productions. Mark Hillringhouse, a New Jersey photographer, has made these films with me and R.G. Evans has written music for both films and has performed and recorded two original songs for the closing credits of each. It makes these project all the more worthwhile when I get to work with my friends. Even my son has helped out, contributing his film scoring talents to the latest project.

What outcomes do you hope to see realized by these documentaries?

Of course we want people watch them. Beyond that, it's about bringing the poetry and the lives of these poets to a wider audience. And in the end, it's about telling a story we think is worth telling. The screenings and the discussions of the films are as much fun as doing readings, seeing the hard work pay off and interacting with poets and lovers of poetry. Not a bad way to spend a day. Anything beyond that is a plus.

Is there a creative connection or relationship between poetry and film-making?

I think the editing process can be similar. Moving shots around like you would lines in a poem, looking for the right transitions, knowing where to cut and trim, keeping it moving. In those ways films are like 60 minute poems.

Do you feel more connected to one over the other?

Not really. I love doing both.

Both your poetry and your films focus on local themes, places and identities. Do you consider yourself a poet and film maker of place?

Yes, definitely. Place, especially when it comes to memory is very important to me. In the films we tried to pay attention to both the Paterson, N.J. and the Salem Ma., landscape. In both cases the respective cities were important to each poet and fueled their work. Like them, I've written a lot about my hometown, Revere, Ma, and about other haunts along the way. In many ways we are where we live, where we spend our time.

Interviewed by Kristine Doll, American translator and poet

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FROM THE VIDYA SAGAR SETU. KOLKATA, 2017

I have seen All

I have seen all
standing on the river bank
far way
in Delhi
I cried with you.
When you starved
I cried
When you were assaulted and partitioned
I was in tears
When you took a foreign ideology
I alerted you
timid then I was,
with shattered nerves
I felt your pain
Shared it with all
Now that I am here
near not so known banks
I think of your past
Every modern values you accepted
without discarding the old ones
reviving the old faiths
The rituals on the ghats
goes same as before
People scream on death
just as before.

Married women
encounter time
with faded vermilion
red dots on their foreheads fading, but still
talk of modernity
theories
of Mao and Marx
Gushing water like the borrowed ideology
through the conch shells
chokes my throat and vibrates my pharynx.

Mysterious cloud on the river
weighed heavily by the weight of water drops
heavily weighed with sufferings and pain
burst into
silver drops
in river and then mingles in ocean.

Come to this river bank
to purchase dreams
to meet the Sun God
with his priceless radiation
water circling clockwise
splashes that hit the bank
take away remaining dreams
flowers and bangles
broken shells
and turmeric
create a mosaic
of red, yellow and orange
in deep dark approaching night.
In the morn
I could watch the broken bangles
are scattered on the river
green as vessel glass.

Mandira Ghosh India

RIPARIAN

You can't step in a river twice,
but there are children born to try,
who won't by threat or by advice
be made to keep their shod feet dry,
who don't resist the flow that snakes
between two points, from A to B:
the insipidity of lakes,
the tidal chaos of the sea.

Simon Hunt America

MR. IN-BETWEEN

I'm neither that nor this. Not six
of one; no dozen halved. My sticks
aren't stones, and I roam neither day
nor night: unchanging, changing, gray.
My name is neither Jack nor Jill.
In latching on to what you will,
when what you get's not what you see,
it seldom pays to mess with me.

Simon Hunt America

METAL

We are selling the metal that kills
so we can afford the spoons that feed our children;
then killing them with the metal that we've just sold
feeding them with the blood on the spoons from happy meals.

We place them in the hands of our enemy -
How far into this storm must we walk before we feel the cold?
preferring the shine of killing steel that glinting blue in falling sky
than the breath with flesh applied – prescribing to gain from the metals of
subtraction.

The daylight would be our undoing
eyes were transfixed by computer generated handshakes -
division of the heart and soul the lies are the truths of man's inked ruin
where only smoke rings travel along carpets like tiny drunken mice.

We are selling the metal that kills
So we can afford the spoons that feed our children.

Matt Duggan England

BELLA CIAO

We were two broken stars,
only ever able to fix one another
when we heard each other's breath;
the electricity touched the glow within our flesh
releasing an ancient and dormant attraction,
that would always remain.
We embraced these depths
a love that never quite died
our flame simmering for decades
then suddenly the gasoline was lite - As two broken stars
reunited like their breaths knew
that on the night they would meet
a stolen kiss would be returned
as both broken stars became one once again.

Matt Duggan England

UNUSED PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE LIBRARY OF THE MORNING

The new swallows the old, time
follows and time spent, of hazy palms

in irradiance across shadowy
foreheads hiding the protectorate

of eyes and nose, sometimes the old
sticks out of the new's crooked

mouth, squinting in an ovular of the
sun's seed. This small island

of palmed light cannot exist
in such an impossible pin of candles.

Grant Tabard England

TRIPTYCH

I have had three deaths,
one for each decade.

To hide them from myself
I've concealed barren pages of earth
underneath the catacomb grey floorboards,
I press my cheek to my deaths, a slow dance
with an ostrich, I taste his arid breath
eaten whole,
beyond sentiment,
dressed in clothes of darkness.

The pain from old wounds
ache like wedding white.

Grant Tabard England

THE STRANGER IN BED FOUR

I've never seen a person dead before,
there he was, an illusory stranger
at the end of the box ward in bed four.
There was no ceremony, no clanger
of grief in a bell's wail, no dignity
'cept the vomit green curtains half hearted
draw so I could still spy the willow tree
of grey pubic hair sprouting unguarded
from the kettle spout zip of life within
death. The lack of vanity in a corpse
is understood and with his rictus grin
he sneers at the living in our goose skin,
hushing against our shell ears; *you are flawed.*
The boundary in my last breath was God.

Grant Tabard England

STUFFED PAWS

No electricity dimmed our past days
in our first flat, grandiose in twilight.

We clattered through the letterbox blind as
church mice making a racket in the wee
small hours. We thought we had the Knowledge when
we wound our way round the cross eyed garden,
twirling with the vague shapes of conifers,
and on that patchy lawn cloaked by sunset
I devoured your iron horse of ribs and
gulped your photograph of the pearl sea-sway,
eating the cloud of your negligee. Your
chestnut grain squeezed into my wrapper of
flesh and we made awkward love, fumbling with
the stuffed paws of drunks, button-eyed with night.

Grant Tabard England

THE FIRE IN THE WOOD

A verse and prose drama

based on the life of California's Big Sur sculptor Edmund Kara

by Peter Thabit Jones

Co-published by Cross-Cultural Communications, USA, and The Seventh
Quarry Press, UK

Includes some texts and artwork by Carolyn Mary Kleefeld

The world-premiere, four evening performances, took place at The
Actors Studio Theatre, Massachusetts, in May 2017.

“Pure theatrical magic” – Marc Clopton, the Director

A touring production of the drama, directed by California's Carey Crockett,
will take place in California in May/June 2018

The book is available via info@cross-culturalcommunications.com and
seventhquarry@btinternet.com Prices: £10.00/\$15

ZEN DIAGRAM IX

under the sliced orange moon
a ship passes its lovers
fish bones hushed within earshot
incomplete arithmetic - double yang
which ship was sailing
axiomatic as absent clouds
in the sun's false light
planets ring like bells
Jung drums out symbols
the birds measure off the sky
and fly in that radius
ocean rolls heave below
ask any sailor beneath the pier
if their tattoos heal the arm's heart

Gloria Keeley America

COOTIE LOVED BE BOP

"Louis Armstrong changed all the brass players around, but after Bird, all of the instruments had to change - drums, piano, bass, trombones, trumpets, saxophones, everything."

- Trumpeter Cootie Williams

his trumpet could chatter like
echoes of Harlem
along the corridors of Nah'Leans
out the mouth of Route 66
the band in sync
the reeds pure weed
blowing notes off key
sublime like jazz
discs spinning
sax on wax
trombone slides
roller coaster rides
up the midway
down the scale

finger zinger

plucking largo, then stretto
snap of skins
like bowling pins
in a back alley
the cats smooth paradiddle
pawing up the fence
man those cats could play

Gloria Keeley America

DON'T LET ME GO

When last
candle dusty,

when forgotten
clocks stop,

when the last
mandolin plays to
the last rusted
snowdrop,

when church
bells fall in
silence,

when the wishing
well coins decay,

like the wizened once
joyful children would
on frozen lakes loudly play,

when tree rings in
open severed - their mortal
leaved in feathered weep,

when the goodbye
sodden tiger dries in
faded penned to sleep,

when my softly
seared to embers,

as the curtains
close the show,

til the sun devours
your final hours - til then
don't let me go.

Stephen Philip Druce England

FLOWERS GROW ON THE MOON

Oh laced velvet pink, bee-stitched
celestial lemon rays to un-thirst
litter-wizened thorn dust in stemmed prayer,

ice flake of trample crimson collide
apple fleet and trumpet panther light,

quicken the jet peach, soft thunder shuffle
lilac in old turn liquor pouring chalk, bloom

barking seed rainbow orchards, unclasped
waterfalls of cherry-winged and blueberry swans,

stroking the void, the marble earth -

the unknown us.

Stephen Philip Druce England

THE MEANING OF MY LAST NAME

I was told
it means
nothing,
but it wasn't
until I started
my indigenous
studies
and discovered

my aboriginal
roots,
the way ancestors
can be sterilized
with darkness,
and my name,
in Sámi
means I am
married
to aurora borealis,
as Arctic
as its critically
endangered fox,
my historical heart
cold
and
living
and
full
of
exploding
ice

Ron Riecki America

I SOMETIMES WISH I COULD LIGHT CHRISTMAS ON FIRE

It's the one day of the year where the most people die. And so sometimes I want to take the Yule log and roll it into a pile of manger hay, the depression turning crimson red, the flames licking my palms like a god. I want Christmas to burn so full of fever that the lack of family will seem like a gift. Poverty is something that should melt, the credit cards hot as fog in Hell. The most beautiful Christmas lights of an entire house lit ablaze, the chimney safe and sound. And then from the ash, maybe we can do sometimes better, the post-apocalyptic peace

Ron Riecki America

BOB DYLAN: BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

The strong cardboard sleeve came
with Till's photograph
as the back cover turned
to an illustration by Oppenheim;
I'd heard Dylan sing live
only once in an English field,
occupying the stage like an actor
with a sense of timeless
fashion wearing a hat and guitar,
his poetry, gospel and folk
decades away from the Nobel prize,
those unpredictable words he'd forged
to the acoustic and electric music.

Byron Beynon Wales

MY FATHER AT NINETY

He still tends his garden
to the natural call of light
that each season brings.
Once a week drives his car,
steering a familiar route
to replenish the required need.
He eats less now,
but undimmed he remembers
seeing Haile Selassie in Penllergaer,
and the destructive fires
caused by the Swansea blitz.
The year he was born
a total solar eclipse
rested over Wales.
His steps are strong,
he lives on with the changing tides,
walks in a world that races
onwards in the afterglow of a lingering day.

Byron Beynon Wales

BAR

The bar bends and swoops through
Range and memory, bird on a breeze
Over land then sea. I look up to
Try to see this second

as it was then. Only to slip and
Fall back. The note bellows
In this nave and rests on
A drive home or her in a pub
but

It struggles to hold. She said she
Liked this song.

Edward Channer England

MODWENNA

The hill top meets the grey sky
And cascades down the valley side,
Where trees and terraces fall to
The washlands waiting below.

This water shines silver as a blade
That cuts the grass year on year.
There is silence, the river's brief frenzy,
Then the road.

She was here
Before the old pump house and
Before these ancient monastery stones,
Now fused in the wall of Primark.

Before the dog walkers and cheap cider
She saw the warmth of the water's edge,
And felt the death beauty of autumn
Before each winter left its scar.

She would have sat then
Where the trees ended,

Marked now by streams of cars
And the muddy brick of houses.

She would have tried to think
And see further
Through the water to the concrete
And condoms thrown into the grass.

And she would know that
The trees would die and
The roofs would rise and
Her church would fall

While the river's beat
Would renew the meadow below.

Edward Channer England

HOSPITAL WALLS

Green walls pose over rows
Of beds and hang in the air
Like disinfectant
Over tables and chairs.

The cells have stopped growing
And the world falls apart. I'm
Sorry the cells are growing
And the world falls apart. The
Cells are irreparable and the world is ending.

The green of these walls
Does not match the
Gravity of the situation inside.
They should be black and gold,
Build them high
Like church spires
Then burn them to the ground.

In a different green the
Cells are developing
And a world is beating. Or the

Cells are gone
And the world is still here.

These walls should be as Turner would be.
The violence of the storm beats you until
You cannot breath
But the eye seeks out the sun.

Edward Channer England

VOICES IN THE MIST

The fog that smothers us as we leave the flat
Is now a constant. And these grey London skies have
Been getting greyer as the ink dries.
While we waltz down the lane
It lies heavy,
With pornographic pain and empty happiness
Fed daily to a million mouths
(You turn to me with tears, has it really
Crept up over these happy years?)
We continue through the mist, and see
Wedding dress windows in a photograph.

But the fog makes the eyes strain and reduces
Life's game to a set of scenes,
Flat and faint.
These pictures pour by, powered through
By the vapour voices soon gone,
Ticked off one by one.
Ticked off and onto the next, like
Sunday's shopping list.

For these are the voices of the insatiable millions,
Who fire their wisdom and updates and boredom across
The greatest of intangible spaces
To create the rambling dankness that
Smothers our faces. And they cry
'I will tell the world that I am not what they think
Or that I am'.
Bellowing through the glass.

But we are alone in this fog. We create these
Projections. An endless assault
Showing love or death or mediocrity
As a peacock feather. Plastic. Discoloured by blind
Flaunting, only to say
Here I am. Look here.
I am here.
Please look here before I go.

Edward Channer England

1963 WINDSHIELD WIPERS

psssh thump, psssh thump, psssh thump
In the back of the station wagon,

I am warm, curled in a blanket.
The water on the interstate
splashes up into the wheel wells
churning my head toward sleep.

Thanksgiving at grandma's.
Bloated belly of mashed potatoes
and cranberries, my favorites.

In the front seat
my mother whispers
about her sister's new
mink stole, how beautiful and
soft it was.

My mother is wondering
how my aunt and uncle could
afford the new mink stole.

I am in the back, drifting
into Christmas toy dreams.

Up front
I hear my father sigh.

Charles Van Eman America

KEROUAC IN THE CORNER

Oh drunken, screaming, writing lonely, genius.
Road-rapping, soul-tapping lover of all existent
life on earth and visions in the night.

Dream reader, speed slamming poet of the highway,
loving your soul and zest for life, it is in me, I am you,
you are me, I know it, I have felt it, we are special.

Shrouds of fog, mysteries of the world await me,
as you, but now, different, but the same, years,
but not so many. Jack!

Why not live to help me in confusion, question,
bop, beat, nodding head, drunk.

Angry in your dismay, inclusive of the total
existence of your soul being life to the millions
left homeless in your demise. Oh Jack, I will continue the sound, the beat,
IT will be again, yes, yes, as one we will be,
as one IT will be, together in prose we will sing
hallelujahs of the struggles in the world.

Charles Van Eman America

TIME

A thought takes form then dwindles as the archer—
his fingers frozen and his eyelids narrow—
pulls back the bowstring to release an arrow:
each moment is arrival to departure.

Pedro Poitevin Amerca

AT THE HARBOR

I'm still not sure it's you out there waving
in my direction.
The dock is full of people
waiting—

two women next to me
talk about a far-off revolution—
the first of many to come, one says,
and go, the other says,
and while the first of them gestures,
the other shakes her head;
a child complains to his mother
about the sudden smell of fish,
but he's soon transfixed
by a seagull flapping its wings
as it lands nearby;
a man raises an eyebrow,
and from the way his body shifts,
I gather he's unhappy
about the loud music booming
through the earphones
of a young man nodding along
in solemn synchrony
with the radio.

I hear an improbable word:
stardust.

I flow back
to the time you said
it's not true,
we're not made of stardust, honey,
it simply comes and goes like we do—
how I came the closest
to grasping what you meant
when suddenly our kiss
vanished—
we're waves, you said,
waves.

Pedro Poitevin Amerca

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

INTERVIEW WITH MANOLIS, CANADIAN-GREEK POET



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Manolis (Emmanuel Aligizakis) is a Greek-Canadian poet and author who is one of the most prolific writers of the Greek diaspora. Born in the village of Kolibari on the island of Crete in 1947, he moved with his family at a young age to Thessaloniki and then to Athens, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Sciences from the Panteion University of Athens. After graduation, he served in the armed forces for two years and then emigrated to Vancouver in 1973, where he was employed as an iron worker, train laborer, taxi driver, and stock broker. Later he studied English Literature at Simon Fraser University. He was recently appointed an honorary instructor and fellow of the International Arts Academy and awarded a Master's for the Arts in Literature. He is recognized for

his ability to convey images and thoughts in a rich and evocative language that resonates deeply within the reader. He has written three novels and numerous collections of poetry. His articles, poems, and short stories in both Greek and English have appeared in various magazines and newspapers in Canada, United States, Sweden, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Australia, Jordan, Serbia, and Greece. His poetry has been translated into Spanish, Romanian, Swedish, German, Hungarian, Arabic, Turkish, Serbian, and Russian. He now lives in White Rock, Canada, where he spends his time writing, gardening, traveling, and heading Libros Libertad, an unorthodox and independent publishing company which he founded in 2006 with the mission of publishing exceptional literature. His translation *George Seferis-Collected Poems* was shortlisted for the Greek National Literary Awards, the highest literary recognition of Greece.

Bill Wolak: Who were the first poets that you enjoyed reading?

Manolis: The first poetry I read as a youngster included Odysseus Elytis' *Axion Esti*, Yannis Ritsos's *Romiosini*, and "*Epitaphios*," George Seferis' "Epiphany '37" and "Stratis Thalasinis," Constantine Cavafy's "Ithaka" and "The City." These poems helped me a lot to understand contemporary Greek poetry. Even earlier than those, I remember reading poems by Solomos and Valaoritis, both poets belonged to the Heptanisian School of Poetry, which represented the beginning of the modern Greek poetry.

BW: When did you begin writing poetry?

M: About fifteen years ago, I started writing on a regular basis, although I wrote quite a few poems before that. In fact, I believe I wrote my first poem 35 years ago when I was in my early thirties.

BW: How do you go about writing a poem? Do you write directly on the computer? Or do you begin with pen and paper?

M: I write as it comes, and the circumstances dictate how to do it. I've written poetic images on restaurant napkins, on toilet paper, and on the paper towels we used to clean our hands with at work. In my youth, I wrote everything by hand with pen and paper before I would put it in the computer. These days, I find the

computer as easy and as practical as anything else.

BW: Do you write your poems all at once, or do you work on them a little at a time?

M: I write them as they “appear.” Sometimes I write a few poems together; sometimes one at a time, and there are times that I’m so much infused with a theme that I write on a continued basis completing a whole book in a matter of days. That was certainly the case with my poetry book *Übermensch* that I wrote in eleven days: all sixty-six poems of it, handwritten day after day, six per day, you could say, until I had the first draft of this book completed. That is how much I was inspired with the metaphysical theme of that book. Also, my latest book *The Second Advent of Zeus* was completed in a similar fashion, although I re-wrote this book twice, until I was pleased with the outcome.

BW: Do you keep a journal or a notebook?

M: No, I’ve never kept a journal, but I keep various files on which I work on a regular basis; I work on several poetry books at the same time, you could say, and I keep on adding until I have the length of book I consider enough to polish and finalize before I show it to my poetry publisher. I never get stuck on any book, since I keep a few going at the same time, and it is always a matter of time before one of those files is complete as a first draft.

BW: You are a bilingual poet, whose poems appear in both Greek and English when they are published. Do you tend to write mostly in Greek, English, or a mixture of both languages?

M: I write the images as they come to mind. When my mind is in a Greek mode, for example, I listen to a song in Greek and an image comes to mind, an image that emanated from the lyrics of the Greek verses in that song, I write that in Greek. If, on the contrary, I’m in an English mode and an image appears, I write it in English. When I have a poem in Greek and I try to write it in English, almost every time I add something extra to it, or I delete something from the original that doesn’t seem right. If I go back and forth from one language to the other, soon enough I have a version of the poem that I like in both languages. Then I know the poem is good

enough, and I leave it alone for a while. I usually go at them again before I send the draft to the publisher, and sometimes I get his opinion for further editorial work.

BW: You also translate Greek poetry. Which poets have you translated? Why have you selected those particular poets to translate? What draws you to them?

M: I have translated Constantine Cavafy, George Seferis, Yannis Ritsos, Tasos Livaditis, Dimitris Liantinis, Katerina Anghelaki, Kiki Dimoula, Kostis Palamas, and others. These poets along with Odysseus Elytis and Dionisios Solomos, Andreas Kalvos, Aggelos Sikelianos, Aristitelis Valaoritis, Nikos Kazantzakis, Kostas Varnalis, Manolis Anagnostakis. Some of these poets were the ones who influenced me as a youngster and molded me into the poet I have become. These are the most distinguished masters of Greek poetry. The quality of their work is what attracted me to them.

BW: You are also a poet-publisher. Can you explain how Libros Libertad got started?

M: I started my publishing company back in 1996 with the idea of publishing literature. I spent my own funds. I have never received any financial assistance from any of the federal or provincial programs and I do this for the well-being of the world. Rarely does a book cover its expenses through sales of copies; in fact, I make all Libros Libertad books available on Amazon, although I lose money on every single one sold there. However, it exposes my authors to the entire world, and for this reason alone I insist on making my books available. In general terms, this is my contribution to improving life on earth.

BW: You vacation every year on Crete. What draws you back there?

M: What draws me back to my roots is the nostalgia that every émigré feels when away from the sacred soil of their childhoods. It's an emotional reverence that connects oneself (the émigré) with the place of birth. The images of their schooling, the things they were taught, traditions, celebrations, history, all these and many more are the forces which create that pull back to the motherland. I, more so than many others, could say that I feel connected with the intellectual,

literary, creative Greece, that indisputable creativity of the Greek spirit, which I serve in my humble way in the foreign land I have lived for the last forty-three years. Sometimes emotions such as these are difficult to put in words, yet they are also very easily discerned and understood by all.

BW: When you are not writing and publishing, what kind of books do you enjoy reading?

M: Primarily, I enjoy literature, although I also have developed an inclination to read philosophical works, and I most times have one next to me. Of course, one may ask: how can you read a philosophical book while the TV is on or while you aren't secluded in a quiet place so you can enjoy such depth of thought that demands an analytical mind in full alert? It is as easy as anything else. One simply detaches from all influences at the time, and one reads, despite the content of the book. And I do so.

BW: Most of the Greek poets that you have translated write in free verse. Cavafy, on the other hand, sometimes uses meter and rhyme. When you translate Cavafy, do you try to employ meter and rhyme in your English translations?

M: I always translate in free verse, even when I translate a poem written in meter and rhyme because it is simply impossible to succeed in reproducing the form without losing on the substance. I strongly believe that the translator has to have the freedom to choose the way he or she feels is *the proper way* to convey in the second language the images and implied messages of the original work. Otherwise, he or she may run into the serious trouble by writing a piece which doesn't truly belong to either side of the two cosmoses between which he or she alternates. One can't write a poem in English from the original Greek without being in a clear English mental state and vice versa. When the two modes mingle and mix, the translation is unsuccessful.

BW: Your latest volume of poetry is entitled *The Second Advent of Zeus*. In general, what role does Greek mythology play in your poetry?

M: Greek mythology is an integral part of my work, whether poetry or prose. Fortunately, I've been molded in that culture in a seamless way to the point that mythological images and traces of ancient grandeur are abundant in my work. The

messages of the myths are interwoven in my poetry in a unique way, characteristic to most poets, and evidently to my work.

BW: Why do you prefer to be known as a poet by only by the familiar form your first name Manolis, instead of Manolis Aligizakis or Emmanuel Aligizakis?

M: I chose the simple *Manolis* for two reasons. There are a few quite successful Greeks who are globally known only with their first name. The second reason is that the common name *Manolis*, instead of my formal Emmanuel, is truly Cretan, a very common name in the island. Once, I remember, my wife and I were at the Chania Public Market. She was inside a kiosk selecting an item, and I stood by the entrance perusing the commotion of the people going and coming. When she needed my assistance and called my name, *Manolis*, half a dozen men turned their heads towards her, which made her feel embarrassed. It proves the point of how many men are named *Manolis* in Crete. On the other hand, *Manolis* is purely a Cretan name, whereas Emmanuel is Hebrew, and I'm a Cretan.

BW: At the age of eleven, you transcribed the nearly 500 year old romantic poem *Erotokritos*. How long is that poem? What made you want to transcribe that particular poem? Why have you released a limited edition of that original transcription? How was it reproduced?

M: When I was eleven years old, we lived in the suburb of Athens called Peristeri. During the summer between fifth and sixth grades while my time was mostly spent in playing with my brother and the other kids of the neighborhood, my father brought home a copy of the *Erotokritos* and told me to read it. Up to that time, I knew the *Erotokritos* as a song everyone in Crete sang. I remember it in a radio program. I remember listening to it sung in various functions and celebrations. I remember my grandfather singing some verses of it. We all knew how to sing a few verses. But I didn't know this song was ten thousand lines long in rhyming verse. Also, since we were poor at that time and unable to ever buy such a book, I decided not only to read it but to copy it as well. When I told my father I had decided to transcribe the whole poem, he bought me paper and two colored big pens, a blue and a red one, and the work started. It took me nine months to transcribe the work, which took me away from my playing. However, I enjoyed the whole process. In 2004 when on holidays in Crete, I re-discovered my transcribed *Erotokritos* in my bookcase where all my academic books were collecting dust. I

took it to Canada and pondered what to do with it. After consulting various people and experts in the field, I decided to reproduce the book in a collectible, limited edition of 100 numbered, signed, copies. The book designer of my publishing company put it together. It is a hardbound book, a special book, one of a kind, the only longhand book of this kind in the world. It is available for eclectic collectors at the price of \$5,000.00 per copy.

BW: Which, if any, English speaking poets have had the most influence on your writing?

M: I've read quite a few, but a couple of them I can point out as they represent a serious influence on my writing. These two are T. S. Eliot and Seamus Heaney.

BW: Do you have any favorite Canadian poets?

M: Yes, I truly enjoy the poetry of Patrick Lane, an icon in the Canadian poetry scene, and others such as Lorna Crozier, George Bowering, Don McKay, Fred Wah, and Jamie Reid, who was also a good friend.

BW: Who are your favorite novelists?

M: My favorites include the famous Greeks Nikos Kazantzakis, Grigoris Xenopoulos, and Alexandros Papadiamantis to name a few. From World Literature, I enjoy Victor Hugo, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jules Verne, Alexander Dumas, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Henry James and many others.

BW: You are a poet, a novelist, and a writer of short stories. When you begin writing, how do you know if the work is a poem, a short story, or a novel?

M: It all starts with the first concept and it develops as the process begins. Of course, one doesn't write a four hundred page novel starting with four verses of a poem. The concept of the poem is different from a novel that needs a plot, many characters, their development, and twists and turns. Usually a poem doesn't have these elements.

BW: How do you go about writing your novels? Do you write a scene a day? Do you have an intricate plan before you begin writing, or do you allow the plot to develop as you write?

M: It all starts with the first concept; I usually have a certain plan that I want to

follow, a central idea of what the book will be, and once I start, I make sure I keep a certain discipline. For example, I try to write two to three pages daily until I have the whole story developed and all the subjects covered. However, when I start with the first lines, I know that it'll take its form bit by bit and page after page. And when the writing transforms into a novel, a basic storyline is in place up front, what I call the spine of the novel. Then the story develops incrementally. There are times when the plot takes turns and twists which were never contemplated beforehand, although at the end they become a very important part of the whole work. An example of the discipline I mentioned earlier is this: when I wrote my last novel *The Quest*, which is not published yet, I started with the idea of writing a novel of about 200 to 250 pages. I had a basic structure in my mind, and I committed to write between 2 and 3 pages daily. In 3 and an half months, I had written the first draft of a 234 page novel.

BW: So far, what do you consider the most satisfying or fulfilling books that you have written?

M: I'm very satisfied with my novel *The Quest*, but I also enjoyed my two poetry books *Übermensch* and *Chthonian Bodies*. The second title refers to a combination of my poetry and the pictures of paintings of a good friend-painter Ken Kirkby, of whose paintings my poems speak. It is a unique book, just like my *Übermensch*.

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PRODDING

My lips you touch
with your fingers
keep silent—
you whisper
and let me listen
to the crickets' song
don't let the night's remorse
come and disrupt
our silky whispers
nor our fiery
coupling under
the satin bed-sheet
this moment let
like a rhyming couplet
mimic our softest moaning

SORROW

You came barefoot
sunburn and naked
dried up sunflower
that blinded me
refuge where
I wanted
to hide all my sorrow.
All my sorrow.

RESPONSE

In the wrath of the tempest
I longed for a glimmer of hope
in the heat of July
I seek for the body of a woman
tanned and smooth
and the north wind said
you've got to find your path
in your ancestors footsteps
lean and in reverence
lift the marble
and feel their warmth
and I asked the southwest wind
where is my sunshine
and it said
inside your heart
it hides

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

DON'T LOCK ME OUT

Don't lock me out
on the long or short journey
we may take;
take me with you,
you will take my heart
that repository of our being.

Don't put me in a cage;
my song a universal melody
is there for all to hear
and I will sing
to the sweet atmosphere,
Let me always be free.

Don't try to change me;
let me stay a while
with you until in truth
I learn to flex my wings and fly

to heights unthinkable
with unshakeable faith.

Don't frighten me
as I learn how to laugh and cry,
without judgement or guilt
when I smile with the shining sun
or when tears fall with hope's
joys and sorrows.

Let me not be lonely.
Oh that I will always find
that common link
and dance and sing
along the rainbow, which from clouds
will touch the Earth.

Let me be brave;
let me hear a mother's words ~
Fear not my lovely child,
teach us your song
as we walk life's crazy paving
and with your spirit sing us wisdom.

Jean Salkild Wales

RAINS FROM THE EAST

An armada
of gray clouds
is floating
across
the East River.

Beware,
oh fierce
stalagtites
of Manhattan.

The rains
are going
to fall.

Thunder
& lightning
will shake
the foundations
of your
New York island.

A premonition
of what is
promised
from the East.

Oh, Citizens
of the New City,
seek sanctuary
in the subways,
the subterranean
tunnels.

The surface
is no longer
safe.

Stanley H. Barkan America

THE BUBBLES

There she stands, sinking in the shifting sands,
Loosing her hands, seeing the brink of lands.
She begged for one more drink, and did not think
About their deep link, about her own ink.

The alcohol filled with bubbles, troubles
Destroyed the high buildings and left rubble.
The bubbles of pregnancy are exposed,
And doubly ill : poisoning and poisoned.

Surrounded by smoke, the baby awoke,
Silent and Still blood-soaked, suffered a stroke,
Unable to scream, yet able to dream.

The bloody fire burning in their heart,
Spreads the desire and ink for my art,
But deadly bubbles stay in the bloodstream.

Justine Milhé France



Our Burning Bush (Acrylic Paint on Board, 20 x 16")
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IN THE BLOOM OF A MOMENT

(for David Campagna)

We didn't realize then
how swiftly life's cycles pass,
or that each moment
only blooms once.

The purple echium
flowers profusely.
Then, as if in an instant,
the petals turn brown.

Its bloom may return
but will it ever be the same?

How transitory is this life.
I am breathless with wonder.

Carolyn Mary Kleefeld America

STILLNESS

Crowned in freedom,
I dance upon the sea,
wearing the wildest daisies,
refusing tyranny.

Swaying to gypsy rhythms,
I confide in the trees.

Birdsongs ride the storm's fresh air.
And rainbows rendezvous
behind gray clouds.

The calendar has vanished.
And a tempest hides
in the ravines.

Ah, on this lyrical day,
stillness drinks me in.

Carolyn Mary Kleefeld America



Gypsy Dream (Acrylic Paint on Canvas, 72 x 60")

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**REVIEWS OF POETRY BOOKS FROM THE SEVENTH QUARRY PRESS
BY JESSICA NEWPORT**

A review of *Swiftscape* by Frances White

Frances White is a teacher, poet and writer who grew up in London. She does however, have strong familial links to South Wales which is evident in her poetry. White began as an English teacher before becoming a Teacher of the Deaf with an aim to promote creative writing. In addition to this she is a founding member of *Words* Poetry Group alongside the late Aeronwy Thomas, daughter of Dylan Thomas who White herself has stated to be a great influence. Inspiration was also gained from individuals including: Bob Dylan, The Liverpool Poets and Robert Frost. White has had three anthologies published and won multiple first prizes in local poetry competitions. She resides in South West London with her husband and has three sons and one granddaughter.

Swiftscape was first published in 2016 by The Seventh Quarry Press; however some of the poems, including earlier versions have appeared in print previously. Her poetry in this collection is mainly short and collectively presents strong themes of childhood and relationships; particularly within families. There is a heavy metaphorical air and focus on nature throughout. Overall, one will gain a sense that what is not said is as clear as what is said.

The title poem appears first and provides our first insight into what the collection will hold. The title, itself an invented word hints at how inventive her poetry will be. We are immediately confronted by nature with the following of the swifts' journey. The poem is weighted with metaphors and rich with imagery. White expertly gives beauty to a scene that one would perhaps be oblivious to and thus here, as in the following poems the reader is gifted a thought-provoking experience, one that travels past the page and remains after the book is put down.

As one moves through the collection it becomes clear that not all will be positive. White is giving us a real representation of life, even the depressing aspects. In LETTER FROM MOUNTAIN ASH, nature and family remain at the forefront, however the tone is sombre and her words much more to the point. She shares that: 'Funeral's over. Now I've cleared my sister's flat keys go back to

warden'. It is a strong reminder of how precious life is and how one must go through the motions irrelevant of emotion because some things just need to be done. Similarly, to end with the words: 'Drat these cataracts' ensures that the reader is painfully aware of the peaks and troughs of life itself. The writer may still be living but it is not a life free from difficulty.

White includes two poems as a tribute to Aeronwy Thomas; POETRY GIVES WAY TO PRAYER and DAFFODILS, I SUPPOSE. In both, her simplistic style beautifully presents the realism of losing somebody dear and the easily forgotten memories that become so important and comforting when the person is gone. As White explains: 'As fragile flesh fails unaware words have no say, eyes have no sight and poetry gives way to prayer.' The alliteration of the opening words is sure to arrest the reader and the remainder reminds how one is powerless. As one proceeds to the next page she shares in her shortest poem of the collection the wisdom that something that appears so insignificant can be so important. Thomas cannot be remembered with 'keepsakes or mementos' because she gave them no importance but White did ask her to share her favourite flower to which the response was: '*Daffodils, I suppose*'. A small fact that may seem mere conversation at the time left White reminiscing that: 'now, I'm glad I asked. I approve of those.' This is a lesson in knowing those we care about fully in order to have something left behind to hold onto. The adoption of nature, primarily the daffodils shows the multifaceted aspects of such a theme.

Both positivity and contentment are evident within the everyday in this collection. WINTER WALK is an example. The content tells, as the title suggests, of the enjoyment that can be found in a simple walk with a loved one. Similarly, in ST. CATHERINE'S HILL we read of the beauty of experiencing nature with somebody dear. The power of the lines: 'our laughter setting us free in a loveliness of ladybirds' is one of many examples in the collection where White employs nature and relationships to send a long-lasting message. It is delightful how she exhibits something which should be so obvious but which is all too often unconsciously relegated to the shadows of our minds. To do so under the disguise of nature results in a lyrical and relatable message.

Within contemporary society, one can all too easily become preoccupied by

commitments and obligations and White gifts us a collection whereby we are reminded of the beauty all around us. She teaches us to appreciate everything because life and relationships are fallible and we must enjoy whenever there is opportunity because it is not a permanent guarantee.

A review of *The Familiar Road* by Jean Salkilld

Jean Salkilld is a teacher and poet who hails from Swansea, South Wales, UK where she was born, grew up and currently resides. She attended Swansea University and enjoyed a teaching career which saw her move to both Essex and Berkshire in England and internationally to Sydney, Australia before returning to Swansea. Salkilld cites poetry as a lifelong interest, one she delved into by completing courses at Swansea University's Department of Adult Continuing Education. Today she is a co-ordinator of the Tuesday Poetry Group which was founded in 2009 and encourages creative writing. The Tuesday Poetry Group created the Annual Tuesday Poetry Anthology to support local charities. Salkilld has achieved previous publication both nationally and internationally. *The Familiar Road*, her first singular publication, was first published in 2016 by The Seventh Quarry Press.

The poetry within this collection demonstrates a strong theme of travel, not only through her home country of Wales but around the world, to include destinations such as Serbia and Spain. Other themes that emerge are music and art with the reader able to see how both influence Salkilld's words. Alongside this, the use of nature to tell her story is predominant throughout. The reader can expect to be immersed in culture as they enjoy a collection of poems which not only provoke thought and personal reflection but interesting observations on subjects that may be familiar but not seen in the way Salkilld sees them herself.

The title poem opens the collection and offers a wealth of clues as to what will follow. The reader is confronted with a journey first and foremost: 'The familiar road to my grandmother's house'. A literal walk down memory lane as Salkilld shares that 'I walk backwards in time'. She nods to her Welsh roots with the inclusion of the word 'cwm' meaning valley and we gain our first taste of the theme of music with the lines: 'voices that fill the warm summer air Sing the

Present'. There is a strong sense of unrealised anticipation, she listens for a voice from the past but it does not manifest and as she makes the journey she manoeuvres tarnished nature, an 'unhealed, black wound' which all represents that the beauty of memory is not always mirrored in reality.

As the reader continues these themes become solidified. We are further exposed to art and music in poems such as WINTER ROSE and FEET UNBOUND. To consider WINTER ROSE first; her words paint a full and beautiful image as she explains that the rose is: 'Bright and alive its satin face, like the strawberries and cream of summer'. The employment of imagery has such an effect that it is impossible not to visualise the rose she speaks of. As elsewhere in the collection we witness an expert amalgamation of nature and art with a powerful and arresting effect. FEET UNBOUND presents further evidence of nature and art working closely together but to an altogether different result exposing the harsher, less romantic side of winter. Here we have 'arrhythmic rain and baritone winds' as we follow another journey, that of 'a woman with shoeless feet' moving through Morriston in Swansea, Wales. This portrait is one of identity and one's position within society. It is a poem which invites reflection upon how one views a stranger. Salkilld shares 'I caught the metaphor' and it is difficult to believe that the reader will fail to catch it also after the image that Salkilld has woven her words into.

The reader embarks upon a journey that spreads around the world highlighting the theme of travel that the title of the collection suggests. We are taken on a literal journey as we travel through Wales 'watching gusts paint pictures' in GALES AT RHOSSILI before moving into England to 'hear the singing birds of Gloucestershire' in MEETING POINTS. Salkilld covers international geographical locations also; all with a strong air of provoking thought. In LETTER TO A FRIEND IN SERBIA she touches on the fragile relationships that have been established by promoting a close relationship between friends on opposing sides. She shares that: 'we have lost our puppet strings'; an image that promotes the ability to achieve common ground and peace. In MEETING POINTS she reminds one to be humble by confiding that the war veteran 'wore his wounds As proudly As he wore his medals.' This poem is one where the 'endless quest For peace,' is travelled and thus we have a journey within a journey. In addition; Salkilld traces a

life journey, that of a bee in AMBER BEE, it is not a long journey; the author confirms this, however it is one full of accomplishment that can garner wonder and intrigue to a contemporary individual. Salkilld is one such individual. The ‘Sacred Bee of prehistory’ inspired her to compose a poem.

To read Jean Salkilld’s collection is to enjoy an accumulation of poems with a strong moral undertone. The reader embarks on both a literal and metaphorical journey travelling all over the world whilst experiencing the influences of music, nature, art and memory. This is a collection that will resonate strongly and leave one with much to think about and reflect upon even when the reading has concluded.

SWIFTSCAPE by Frances White,
PRICE £6.99 STERLING/\$10 ISBN 978-0-993526-0-3

THE FAMILIAR ROAD by Jean Salkilld,
PRICE £6.99 STERLING/\$10 ISBN 978-0-9935326-4-1

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AUTOCHTHONY

The air purples, as if calving a storm.

We wetten from our insides out, sweat seeping velvet from this
shouldered belligerent weather, eventually peeling off the
skins we’d planned to winter in.

Heaven shudder it should rain here
where the drains are plugged with leaves of rusting chestnut,
liver-spotted sycamore; the spent earth caked with tanning
crud well trodden into ready-rub.

And here it comes: a darkening.

Holly mounts its red alert, ragstone crumbles in surrender,
remnant blackberries shrivel in hedgerows, and the last
flutes of bindweed sag like spent paper hankies; on
cottage steps, fresh-cleaved firewood.

Red roses, yellow roses.

O can't you smell it? the background scent of unkempt ages,
the soil of our being sulphur-rimed; and marking time to
the darkest humour, the slow conflagration of humus.

A russet orchard clings to a the steep descent
that once was grazed by sheep forever shitfaced on windfall;
the grass grown knee-long lies flattened now, the
magnificent drooping boughs abandoned to rot.

The southerly gathers, not sweeping through but piling in.
A delta of geese screaming for somewhere else, bumblebees
flitting along the ridge, and now what's this?—a verdict
of crows.

The Weald is a pool of loose sky
lying between the downs, where a scatter of oasts is the only
clue to where the centuries of hoppers and their camps
have gone, bruises of bluebells to the shade of absent
oaks.

Andy Hickman England

SKINNER'S FARM

This much I remember from when I was three
and a half: running sobbing after my mother
down a foot-worn path, across the playing field
between the copse and a solitary oak; a slur of thunder
as she racked on the brake to the Silver Cross
of my mewling baby brother; her standing still,
fed up with my dallying, angry at me, and all because
I had tripped and grazed my knee.
It's one of my earliest memories.

We were heading home from Skinner's farm
where she had spent all day in sun-lashed fields
picking tray after tray of gooseberries,
her hands, her forearms, welted and wealed.
She and Mr Skinner had a history, sour blood
and unpaid dues between their two families
that none of us ever got to the bottom of.

And wages get docked for seeing to prams
and needy three-year-old sons.

The farm gate lay at the foot of a steep hill,
and the lane rose, narrow and winding, cooped
 between hedgerows eight feet high,
cars barrelling like kegs down a chute,
their drivers untroubled by what passed in a blur.

 Unsafe to walk at my mother's side,
I have to imagine her a knot of nerves,
 that half-mile climb, the out-of-kilter wheels
 and a mithering child at her heels.

We made the summit, the gap in the fence
where she had to lift the whole pram up
 onto an uneven track through the copse—
wheels snagging on roots and clumps of acorn cups—
then hurrying on across the playing field,
 while the sky ballooned and thunder rocked
the trees, and then the drama of my knee, and still
 she had to buy Dad's hake and chips.
And yet I remember none of this.

Andy Hickman England

HOPPING

Thumping over ruts on a wain drawn by
 Archie's steel-saddled tractor, setting out
 the next drift, bales of pokes pitched overboard

 every second row. The creosoted
hop poles add to the tarry fug of hops.

 We skirt the garden to this morning's drift

 where the pickers are hard at work; *they'll strip*
 two acre a day, these ladies in their
floral-printed overalls and wellies.

 Hear ringing out the sing-song counting chant
 of the measurer, the bins already

filled from this year's heavy bines. Tar-black hands
clutch tally cards to chests while pickers
watch a poke fill, as if the measurer
were a cardsharp—did he press those hops down?

The pole puller leans on his hop dog, heaves
the moist bine out of the dry chalky soil,
pole and all, lays it across the scissored

legs of the bin: half cradle, half stretcher.
Women ride the bin side-saddle, naked
children (shaded under the unpicked bines,
up on tip-toe in their wellies) pitch in
to help. *Fill this first, then run off and play.*
Blackened fists gather dew-moist bines,

strip and pinch, strip and pinch. *That's the ticket!*
But watch the old hands fly. *She'll fill two bins
by herself, make fifty shilling a day.*

The tally-man's whistle pierces the drift.
Pickers arch their backs, scoop up dusty soil
to scour tar from their hands, round up children—

it's lunchtime. Out come flasks of tepid tea
and bottles of warm orange-squash, soggy
cheese and tomato butties, hard-boiled eggs.

And wasps at once are everywhere. *Don't wave,
you'll make 'em mad. Mind you don't swaller one.*
Nettle rash. Bee stings. Red, itchy hop-eye.

Queues at the sentry box, the breath of hell
wafting up through its hole. Nearby I found,
in a drainage ditch, a brick—of brimstone.

Andy Hickman England

WRAPPING APPLES

Here are corralled, like spent leaves dammed in the rusting trap

of the culvert under my standing, proofs these house-high trees still fruit apple-red in memory, bauble-like, as should be wrapped for safekeeping. They hang ungathered—ten barrow-loads a piece festoon the boughs, another of windfall at the roots—and a track among them lies beyond a padlocked gate. A squadron of geese

performs a fly-by, recalling my childhood fright at the geese that roamed this very yard, gagging around a dripping tap outside the door of the hot-house packing shed, where piece-workers race a motorized belt awash with apples to be wrapped. Nests of tissue, honeycombed primly in boxwood trays, await inspection, drifting downstream on a parallel roller track.

Down the side, tussocks fingering its oily sump, a Bedford truck stands idling below the shed's open loft. While farmyard geese squabble, men above lower crates to the driver and his mate atop the Bedford's deck, the two-man crew savouring the relative peace of a stationary afternoon's labour. Their load stacked, wrapped and roped under an olive-green tarp, they U-turn by the trees

at the orchard's edge, and are gone. Back inside the shed, trays of tissue-wrapped apples jostle and shunt down the roller track behind of the women's backs, towards two men in dungarees, who lift them onto an angled conveyor belt. The tin roof traps the heat of noon in this sink of dark labour, where the sun pierces darkness only through the gaps in timbers. The women wrap

on, earnest and diligent: there's winter coming and apples to wrap; outside, the low-hung fruit is all but gone. Beneath the trees extend wooden step-ladders, pickers balanced on the very top rungs, men with long arms and acrobatic—if unwitnessed—grace among the shaded upper boughs performing summer's closing act. Soon, the last wrapped apple gone to Borough Market, the peace

of the orchard will be disturbed only by the geese. It's all pieced together from memories—my mother in darkness wrapping apples, the stink of damp from the tap's drip-drip, men in the trees lowering sacks full of red, red apples to those on the ground, a track through an orchard I was free to wander, wary only of geese—and the realisation spreads, like mildew from that dripping tap,

that sweet nostalgia, a honey pot for the displaced, is of a piece with that last, dread age of man. Trees' baubles go unwrapped; intentions litter the gated track as worm-meal for the geese.

Andy Hickman England

AN APPLE TREE CALLED KATIE

With the gift of a graft,
She wriggles into the world;
A Worcester melody re-echoes in her roots.
Her flowing form stands in a plot,
As tranquil as a temple.
She is wistful about creating a crop;
Nearby her rosy cousins cheer,
Their mouth-watering yield tease.
Her small leaves shake,
She hears the hoofs of winter.

Ann Flynn England

THE COMPLIMENT FALLS ON SHIFTING GROUND

The library is as solemn as a litany,
I linger north, south, east and west.
The girl behind the broad counter
Plunges into books with the zest of a pearl hunter.
With a voice as dreamy as a drum beat
And movements as smooth as a clock,
Her fingertips dance on the keyboard
Tracking a title I request.
Her face mirrors a question mark,
Her statement is the same shape.
I use words as if making a neon sign.
Her features glow like a famous title,
The ground is as still as a stone.

Ann Flynn England

MEETING THE FAITHFUL

If it's all one to you
let him step in & tell
how what is changes;
each sound separately
presented from a secret
bell, which we can never
see; a stone repainted
by the rain in different
tones of grey; another
light new-varnishing
tidemarks on the beach.
You say sweet eternity's
meaning is easily in reach,
preserved in the book.
Learn more by looking
& recall how the man
from Ephesus, who lived
on herbs & grass, knew
no words were simple.
With verses lost like his,
the future is fragments:
this line, these phrases,
transcribed through time,
trapped in a scholar's glass.

Note: 'him/the man from Ephesus' – Heraclitus

Charles Wilkinson England

CANTREF Y GWAELOD

waves ring the changes
myth of the submarine bells

folly was the drowning
of the most fertile fields

lost

the lowland hundred

*its port of Gwyndded
gone down
deeper than Carthage
& once Phoenicians came
their blue hands trading copper*

a tide retreating
shows stumps of alder, oak & birch
four thousand years old
- or the glint of an Emperor's head
exposed on centuries of sand

what outlasts the forest
is the way metal travels
& its mercy of commerce
as old as magic
more durable than gods
its routes of lead and gold

Charles Wilkinson England

A BLUE COLLARED SHIRT

The blue collared shirt feels him take it off the shelf
It feels his fingers test its texture, its stiffened neck.
It is shaken out, regarded at arm's length, it is held against his body.
It is rendered worthy and tendered for. It becomes his possession.

The next day, the blue shirt is shaken around his shoulders and sealed.
Its fine, clean cotton holds him closely.
Its sleeves roll around his forearms.
Its finger-boned collar brushes against the nape of his neck.
It touches his belt.

On a Thursday, at lunch, it sees a small figure.
In a faded red cardigan
Or a hand-me-down lilac t-shirt.
Or a lime jersey, holed at the elbows.
The blue shirt reclines in a superior fashion.
Its cuffs rest behind his drumming fingertips.
Its shirtsleeve is raised in a careless farewell.

The blue shirt wraps its arms around some with happy ease.
Its underarm seam rests on his sister's shoulder.
It meets many other garments.
A pretty white blouse. A navy striped Breton. A cashmere cable knit.

With which garment will the blue shirt finally entwine?
What sleeve will thread around its waist,
What fingers will slink under its collar?
Whose touch will gently uncurl its button-holes,
And pull the blue shirt away—

Geraldine Bell England

BIG CAT

Once at your house,
I stood at the back door and idly looked out
Onto a student's scrubland patch of garden
A bent washing line stand with a few rusted pegs
Surrounded by a frieze of cheap fence wood
The colour of a landlord's wrinkled wallet.

But in the darkening gloom
A miniature white forest of flocked spheres
Dandelion clocks en masse
Stood untouched
A hundred fibrous ivory masses,
And a few yellowing lion's manes, for good measure.

And I called out with joy,
'Look at your garden!'
And I begged for the key.
And I remonstrated with you for not having ran out already
And dragging up sheaves of flyaway clouds
And huffing, and puffing, and blowing them all down!

But you wouldn't unlock the door.
Not that you refused;
You just made the tea
And said I looked like a cat, pawing at the door.
You sat down with your housemate and talked of other things.

Ironically there was a cat-flap there
Installed for a hypothetical cat
That would have gambolled about among the dandelions,
Pawing at fluffy minnows floating thereabouts,
Watching the sparks fly like fireflies into the night.

But I couldn't crawl through the square,
And the door remained shut.
I curled up in a chair, and watched you through narrowed eyes.

Geraldine Bell England

SECOND NATURE

Today I googled 'puma'
Because I wanted to see a picture of one in the wild
But because I ordered a pair of running shoes a year ago
A hundred pairs of 'Puma Speed Cat' trainers leapt up at me
And the elusive cougar had to be tracked down
With more targeted phrasing.

And later, in the garden
While I was listening to the distinctive chirruping of the birds
Not knowing which song belonged to which species,
Or what overgrown shrubs such birds were hiding in
I felt grateful that my eyes and ears were free
From pop-ups, impatiently asking
Did you mean: 'Blackbird' by The Beatles?
Do you want to install 'Twitter' (News) ★★ ★★?
Based on your previous purchases, we think you'd like:
Dove Summer Glow Lotion Fair to Medium Nourishing Lotion
(250ml).

Imagine one day you are walking along a winding mountain ridge
The cool, thin air shot through with sunlight
And on an overhead branch a few metres away
You see a severe but majestic bald eagle staring intently ahead.
You pause, breathless, but before you can take in
The cunning yellow of its eyes, the gnarled rings of its claws
Suddenly it transforms into a sweater,
Oddly starched and suspended in mid-air

And a voice says,
Did you mean *American Eagle Outfitters?*

Geraldine Bell England

GULL

I am gull,
a curved blade
through yielding air.
These wings clutch
the seas of the world,
bringing them to me –
the wide shifting wetness,
slate, blue, green,
switching colours with my moods,
undulating rest
rocking me
when my wings
grow fresh power –
the broad, high sea
of blue, grey, white,
its plumage matching mine,
soaring within its embrace
on wings of wind
exalting me forward –
rich, brown seas
rolling beneath my wings,
rippling with dark earth,
churned offering
by the pitiful flightless,
and the storm-high waves
of mottled votive food
piled for my delight and strength.
I shriek with the pleasure,
my call ripping the air
like beak through flesh,
so all may know me as gull,
god of all seas.

J.S. Watts England

MOSSDALE SCAR

The scar is deep
rock-gouged from the moor's bleak green
an unforgiving face of stone
monument to nature's force
mankind's bird-wing fragility.
Beneath the sky-wide memory of land
and the eye's clouded vision,
beyond the flow of sunlight
dark water penetrates
the rock's hidden intimacies
probes and pushes through lightless spaces
carving a subterranean maze of pathways
cracks and cloisters, caverns and aisles
dripping false-shadowed promises
of a rough-hewn holy grail,
the way to Black Keld
and the rainbow halleluiah of the river's flow.

The beck knows its way to the Wharfe
but keeps its secret well
hidden in the pitch
amongst furtive crannies
buried beneath the weight of the world.
The caverns, though, admit fresh pilgrims,
year on year, adrenaline summoned
crawling forward on belly and knees
through barren night-soaked labyrinths
and the darkness of uncertainty
looking for the way
a thirst in need of quenching,
only to return them, unslaked
to the blinding upper world
but first there must be a payment
a layer of raw skin scraped on rock
a splash of blood as libation.

A small enough tithe
for touching the earth's private places
until one midsummer woke an older, primal need,
a hunger that experience could not defeat.
In the darkness
a torn and savage mother
demanding full blood and bone as her due
drew down a torrent of tears
from a darkened sky
until the earth's waters broke
and she took six back into herself,
to be her cold sons and lie
alongside her in sanctuary and mud.
They lie there still
silent in the long night
cradled in limestone
unreturned to sun and the colours of the day.

J.S. Watts England

YEAR OF HARVESTS

Another harvest circles round,
the portents freshly carved.
A year in which, sky
tattooed black with crows,
what we did not know we'd sown
is gathered in.
The death count already ripe
and only January.

We hold our breath,
recognising that grief
most often hunts in threes.
A trinity of loss
triangulating our unspoken fears.
The World carries news
of three untimely heroes,
battle marks become suddenly
glyphs of the dead.

We exhale, forgetting
the unaccounted many,
their marks unnoted,
dying at our own hands.
Man as industrial reaper.
Or the personal griefs
unmourned, except by us,
in places of private shadow
yet surely noted down in some
unseen tally book.
Leaving a greater emptiness
because the tattoo scars are hidden
within our inked-in blackness.

How many so far this year?
Sheaves neatly stacked
in placatory threes.
At the back of my eyes
it feels enough, too much,
or is another offering
already being selected and prepared?
Water with the bitter tang of salt.
A flurry of crow wings.
What are these marks
etched across my face?

J.S. Watts England

REALLY YOU ARE
(after Thomas Lux)

You're so wonderful,
when I think of you
I search my pancreas for stars
and find them,
tiny sugar crystals
glinting one by one,
snow descending

on the shoulders of small men
leading armies
across the Himalayas into Spain.

Bill Freedman Israel

THE GLACIER

There is a green lake in Canada
over whose shoulder like a conscience
a glacier sobers to its end.

One day or night
the glacier in its loneliness
wished a lake,

contracted
like hunger on itself
to sheer it space.

Had you been there
you might have witnessed
that moment of hesitation and surcease,

the need,
even of ice on a yielding slope,
greater for other than expansion.

What it left, this strange
unelicited idea,
was something of its softness,

something just beneath it,
immeasurably smaller,
bounded that it could not grow.

Something deferent and of a measured
depth, its surface
glittering nervously in sunlight.

Something in its image
at a chosen angle to reflect it,
that even in the boil of summer,

rowers
leering to the naked waist
would be aware of ice.

Something, though it did not guess,
that would deepen to the threat of flood
as the ice wept back.

Bill Freedman Israel

SISTER TO THE RAIN

I am sister to the rain
Dorothy Parker

The sky
is a tattered blanket.
The cliff's edge
heralds rain
howlings winds
blow all their fury

I wander
through the iridescent paths
while farther up
uncaring clouds
veil the stars.
I breathe deeply
April's cold solitude
drawing this rainy night
towards me

Lidia Chiarelli, Italy

Lidia Chiarelli: Tramonto in una tazza - *Sunset in a cup*, Edizioni Esordienti E Book, Moncalieri (Torino) Italy E BOOK : <https://www.amazon.com/Tramonto-una-tazza-Sunset-Italian-ebook>

**A CONVERSATION WITH NANCY DONAHUE,
A PHILANTHROPIST PAR EXCELLENCE
“PHILANTHROPY IS A LIFE-STYLE”**



Nancy Donahue © 2018 Nancy Donahue

In the Merrimack Valley, in and around the city of Lowell, Massachusetts (64 or so km northwest of Boston), the name of Nancy Donahue is synonymous with philanthropy in the arts, education, and giving back to the community in terms of time, effort, money and volunteering. Nancy, and her late husband Richard, have given millions through their philanthropic endeavors. Nancy has dedicated countless hours of effort and support to her community – be it serving on many and various boards, her commitments to local museums, schools, charitable organizations, cultural institutions and to the University of Massachusetts Lowell – and many more, too many to list. For her philanthropy, Nancy has been

acknowledged and given awards, most notably by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. One of her biggest accomplishments is the Merrimack Repertory Theatre, recognized both nationally and internationally for its world-class productions. Nancy helped found MRT, and became its first board president in 1979.

I am fortunate enough to have known Nancy for a few years – we serve together on the board of trustees of the Whistler House Museum of Art, where I first met her and have since interacted quite a bit. In my fields of work (education, art, and literature), I have met many people who could be characterized as philanthropists. Nancy is hands-down the epitome of what philanthropy means. The word comes from Greek *philanthropos* – meaning “man-loving” - which can be interpreted as the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed by one’s generosity in terms of money, time, and effort. Dictionaries list “social conscience” as one of the synonyms, which is what Nancy really represents. Many people give – and we certainly thank them – but very few give without ever thinking of any kind of public acknowledgment. Nancy has done, and continues to do, all of this good work because she believes that it is the right thing to do, not because she wants public acknowledgment.

Nancy Donahue is a very well-known name in most political, social and cultural circles in the US – she and her late husband Richard were volunteers for John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s first run for the Senate, and then later for his presidential campaign. They became very close; when JFK became President, he asked Richard to be on his staff. Today, Nancy is invited to important political and cultural events often; she attends dinners sitting alongside the Obamas and other luminaries – and then, she also comes and helps out with events and exhibitions at the Whistler Museum, where I found myself quite a few times arranging a vegetable tray with Nancy while she would tell me stories that made us laugh. Nancy has the talent to make everybody feel at ease. She is an incredibly optimistic, content woman, always ready to laugh – and laugh heartily. Nancy is very passionate about justice and dissatisfied with the current US political situation – but the dissatisfaction and upset don’t stay long with her. She uses the energy for positive action and tries to make a difference wherever she can. She is a great art benefactor because she sees the arts as all-inclusive and fundamental to a society that is civil, just, and fair.

There is a back story that colors this interview. I grew up in one of those small European ex-communist countries where anything having to do with the Western democracies - especially with the US – was forbidden. If we demonstrated any interest, punishment would follow. When I was a very young teenager, during the Cold War, a book was published in my country - it was about the assassination of JFK. I knew there would be only a few copies available and they would be gone fast. I also knew I absolutely had to get a copy somehow – through reading, I could learn more about the world that, for us, was simply unimaginable and forbidden. All we had – if we were lucky – were books, which were oftentimes blacklisted, to read and learn from. If blacklisted, then the act of me reading the book was against the law and punishable. That made reading such books all the more satisfying. Even though the book on the assassination of JFK was not blacklisted, only a very few copies were allowed to be sold. I ran in the early morning to stand in front of the bookstore, waiting for it to open – hoping to get a copy. I did. Reading it was such a fascination – at least a tiny glimpse into another world, unreachable for us; into the mystery of the century, political intrigue – Camelot! Perusing the pictures, I remember thinking – dreaming (in vain, I thought at the time) – that there are people inhabiting this world so foreign to me; one day, I want to be a part of that world. As I was looking at the pictures, one in particular caught my interest. It was a picture of JFK with a man and a woman and many children. The woman – beautiful and elegant - was pregnant. The photo was incredibly candid, and it clearly reflected the warm personal relationship between JFK and this couple with so many children. The image stayed with me for a very long time.

Fast forward many years, past the tectonic political changes in the 1990 (Velvet Revolution) – I have now been living in the US for quite a long time. I have been working in academia and have been involved with art and literature for many years. A few years ago, I became a board member of the Whistler House Museum of Art Board. I was heading to my first board meeting somewhat late, running from the last lecture I had given that day. I entered the room – and there was only one chair free, next to a very elegant-looking, warmly smiling older woman. I asked whether the chair was free, she said – of course, sit down. We struck up a conversation that we both enjoyed very much. Then there were more museum events – we would always talk at least for a while. From the first time I saw this

lovely woman – and every time we would talk – there was a tingling in my brain I could not put my finger on. And then, finally, somebody approached me – asking whether I was fully aware who this woman was. And then it suddenly clicked – this is the pregnant woman from the picture with JFK that always stayed with me! The young teenage girl trying to get a tiny taste of an unimaginable world from reading a hard-to-get book realized who the gracious woman was. Yes – Nancy Donahue, the two of us sharing a connection neither of us was really aware of. The same Nancy I have known for quite a few years and am now interviewing.

Nancy invited me to her house for the interview. She gave me a tour of her beautiful home – and there, on the wall, a letter from JFK to her husband Richard – with THE picture attached – was framed on the wall. So I finally told Nancy the peculiar story of the two if us having been connected for many years, even if we hadn't fully realized it. Nancy was deeply touched by it – I found it very endearing how she could not stop herself from repeating: “Amazing. Amazing. Amazing. Isn't it just amazing how these connections work in life sometimes?” The best prelude to our interview.

Miriam Margala: Nancy - I would like to start with your childhood. I remember you talking at an event about it – as I understand it, your family life and childhood were very formative.

Nancy Donahue: Yes, very much so. My mother was always volunteering, involved with the community. Through her volunteering, she was rewarded with many great friends of many backgrounds and ethnicities. We were poor – during the depression, my father, who was a college educated engineer, lost his job and had to sell 10 cent insurance door-to-door. During the Second World War, many jobs had been vacated because of all the men who left to fight in the war so I ended up working on a farm. I would plant celery, drive a tractor - I would be yelled at to drive carefully, not to drive over stones because that would damage blades which were made of steel – a precious material during the war. We did hard work for a little money – but we were still volunteering and giving back to the community. Even during the depression, at school, it was expected to bring a dime for the community box so that others who were even poorer could get help. But my

mother was the best example – always volunteering. It was never questioned, helping others was simply done and so pretty much by osmosis that became part of my life, part of me.

MM: How do you get from volunteering to founding a theatre which today is renowned both nationally and internationally for its world class productions?

ND: Well, we had to figure it out step by step. We certainly didn't have any money and I had to put together a group of people to be able to do it. Thankfully, through volunteering I had a lot of good friends. We put together a board of directors and started going around, asking questions and asking for money. We would go to Boston to distribute flyers advertising our shows. We didn't have our own space at the beginning, but we were able to secure space at the University. We didn't have any money, really – in fact, we took out personal loans! We simply moved forward – and when you know what you want to accomplish and set out to do, you find your way. I remember going to the Met with a friend so that we could see and observe an opera performance. I could not enjoy the performance at all – all I saw was money-money-money. The cost of a production – people, costumes, stage design. But I also realized how much I needed to fight for it, to promote it and to get financial backing for it. I got my friends from the board to chip in, I and another friend, we took out a personal loan and somehow, we put together what we needed for our opening show. We started as a very small company but eventually, we grew. But you know it is important to realize that the work never stops – it is not easy to keep up and run a successful theatre. About 10 years ago, we almost closed down. So I invited to my house people who had the means, in different ways, to help out and we came up with a plan to keep the theatre going. It's never ending – and it is not easy but it is very rewarding and important to have a theatre for the community.

MM: Well, the Merrimack Repertory Theatre has become a world-class theatre visited not only by the immediate community but by people from all over the world. The critical acclaim is very strong and positive. A great success – without your belief in it and your tenacity, the region would not have a theatre! Why do you believe it is so important?

ND: I must say I'm not an artist at all – I don't paint, I don't draw, I don't play the piano, and I don't act. I have no talent that way; however, I do admire art and artists. When I started the theatre I found I had to defend the arts all the time because people would say - what do we need that for? Why should it be in Lowell? Throughout it was really a battle to get people to understand that there was nothing else here, really the only thing that was here was the Golden Gloves – a boxing competition... (Nancy laughs). So I felt strongly that it was really important to have a theatre, a place for performing arts here. For years we had to keep defending the arts, its importance – and still today you have to. It's not offered in all schools anymore; in fact, it's the first thing to be cut from their programs. To me, the arts are the universal language – they speak to everybody, all of us, no matter what language we speak or where we came from; whether you're a republican or democrat; religious or not religious - the arts speak to everybody in some way. Today, the landscape here in Lowell is dramatically different – music, art theatre, dance, museums. But there's no question about it: it's a battle all the time and I don't think people realize what arts can do for children, for their learning, but also for adults –for all of us as a community, as a society.

MM: I believe that you pretty much cannot have a healthy community or society without the arts – music, performing, visual art, literature....

ND: No, you can't. I think it was Kennedy who said that a nation cannot be great or civilized without the arts.

MM: Yes, Kennedy was certainly a great supporter of the arts - and you would know that better than me. Now we find ourselves in a very different situation – but you have certainly proved that if one is tenacious, so much can be accomplished!

ND: As I said, I'm not an artist – I'm not talented that way - but I have always admired artists completely; it boggles my mind what they can do. And I was fortunate to be exposed to the arts – and I am talking about public schools, a long time ago. And then they started cutting off the arts from schools and communities so in the early days, I could give my time and my effort and try to be a leader and get other people involved. When Richard and I were first married, we didn't have a cent to our name but I got involved and started doing something about the lack of

the arts. I lobbied for the arts with the city council and it was not easy, I had to deal with attitudes I already mentioned – people would be asking why should we care for art here? But I lobbied because I wanted to, I thought it was important – somebody needed to do something about it. I kept lobbying our city council that we should have an art district. So with a couple of friends – one of them was the city manager and another a city councilor and an artist – we went to Providence where they had a cultural district at the time. We went there to look at their art district, we met their mayor and asked a whole lot of questions and we came back and started the art district in Lowell. Absolutely – you have to be tenacious about it. It takes work – it never stops! A lot of work. If the flowerbed is not being watered, nothing happens! It all dies. Then, as the years went on, my husband and I we became fortunate and were able to contribute financially as well so that's when we started contributing money in addition to time and effort. We both believed that the arts are very important for our community and city – and once we were able to give money, that's what we did.

MM: What specifically is it that you see as vital – what do the arts do for us?

ND: I don't think people's lives are complete without the arts. Which means communities, cities, the entire country! I think the arts are vital to all of us as human beings. They're universal – inclusive rather than divisive, which is what we see a lot of these days. Art makes us pause, think and question. It helps us be better human beings, more inclusive, because art is inclusive.

MM: That's an interesting issue to consider - do you think the arts can change anything? Would you say they're even more important today?

ND: Much more important today – yes! But art is not necessarily seen by everybody, especially those in power who could do something about it, as important. That's very unfortunate. The arts can lift all of us – make us more understanding, civil.

MM: Do you think there is any relationship between the situation we're in right now as a society - where vulgarity seems to have become a norm and the arts being cut off from schools and communities?

ND: Yes, I believe there is. Again, it goes back to the leadership, no matter which level – mayor, governor, president, or someone in the community – if they’re vulgar, it becomes systemic; it spreads. I think the influence – sad to say it – of social media has a lot to do with it too. That’s a shame – it should be used to make things better rather than more vulgar and unpleasant. Which is exactly where the arts belong – to counteract all that vulgarity and divisiveness.

MM: I truly believe that to be exposed to the arts as a young person – a student – can be life changing. It certainly was for me. What are your thoughts?

ND: Yes, absolutely! This is way back, but when MRT started the first program for college kids, and they started attending theatre performances as part of their curriculum, it was really eye opening! So many hadn’t had the opportunity before and some of them walked out really changed, like you said. They would exclaim “Oh, I never knew that! I can’t believe that!” And they would talk about it, discuss it; it opened them up to something they had no idea existed... And some of these kids, once they’re exposed to the arts, they discover they can paint or draw; or act – and they end up going to art school. If we keep art programs in schools, this can happen to a 4th grader – it can be life-changing.

In terms of performances, experiencing art – as I’ve already said, the arts are all-inclusive. These students can be interested in different things, but they can all go together and sit, be part of the community as they listen to music or watch theatre or go to a museum. They are experiencing the same thing together.

MM: Now that you mention music, it also is being cut off in schools. It’s been proven that music and other art programs help students cognitively, help them do better academically. Art programs are vital – not only as a social, communal phenomenon, but in terms of learning and cognitive processes as well. The arts help children and students learn and think.

ND: Absolutely, vital, we both agree. The arts are needed – we cannot function fully without them.

MM: Do you remember your first moment – when you were exposed to some aspect of the arts and it affected you?

ND: The one I vividly remember – I lived in New Britain, Connecticut, and Hartford was the big city. A friend of mine and her parents took me to the opera in Hartford. It was La Boheme – and I was just taken! I couldn't believe it; it was very dramatic – my first great experience, definitely very dramatic. That was my opening another door.

MM: And with your dedication, effort and financial support, you have been opening this door to many others in your community. I do have to ask – you have 11 children! For decades, you have been volunteering, leading in various efforts, taking care of others – how do you do it when you have 11 children?

ND: Well, I do not know, I don't have much to say about it other than we've always volunteered, it's always been part of our life. With that many children, it is definitely all a blur! But our house has always been a happy house, full of children, activities, and to be involved in the community was all part of it, we never questioned it.

MM: In fact, Nancy, you said that it's a lifestyle.

ND: Absolutely, that's what it means. That's who I am – and I have to go back to my mother and her example. She was such a positive, energetic person. She told me to never be a negative person. Always be positive – of course there are many problems we need to deal with, and I do get upset. For example, the terrible inequity in our society between the wealthy and the poor. It is terribly wrong and I get very upset. But then I think of my mother and I choose to be active, positive, and do something about it. You know, when Philip was born (MM's note: Nancy's son who was born with Down syndrome, today in his 40s) it was terrible – they told us that the best situation for him and us would be to put him in an institution because he needed to be in a special place where they could take care of his needs. And I thought – this is so ridiculous! Yes, he needs people who would take care of him, all the time, with love, and that is his own family! We said no way, we are taking our baby with us and we will give him all the love we have. And Philip became the glue – he gives back all the love he receives, and much more. He lives with me – and I drive him to his work every day. (MM's note: Philip works in a grocery store where everybody knows him and enjoys interacting with him.) He's

been nothing but joy in our life. You have to meet him, Miriam! He's home and a bit later, I have to drive him to work – so I'll introduce you. I think Philip embodies what we as a society forgot to show – simple appreciation, affection. When we had the dinner with the Obamas, I took Philip with me and all the security people, all the other VIPs – it did not matter. Philip charged ahead toward President Obama and Michele, hugged both and had a conversation with them. He was pretty much leading the dinner talks at the table. Philip teaches us all how to live – how to live better and be considerate.

MM: I have to say it is very clear that you have had a happy life and that your family, children, close friends, your community are of outmost importance to you. It is almost redundant to ask: what inspires you?

ND: It is the work I do every day. When I go out and volunteer and work it gives me back energy and health. Of course sometimes I wake up and ask – do I really have to go to that meeting? And then I get up and go to the meeting – and immediately, feel better and energized. Anytime I do not do much for a few days – I feel sluggish, I don't feel good. I have to be active – it gives me energy, it keeps me moving. You know, the satisfaction I get out of giving to others far outweighs the satisfaction one gets from getting something for oneself. Even if it's just a small thing – making somebody smile, feel better. Giving to others gives me satisfaction – and that is the way I have lived my life and that's what I taught my children. As we discussed - it's a lifestyle.

MM: Let's do a few of rapid-fire questions: Who is your favorite author?

ND: John Steinbeck.

MM: Visual artist?

ND: I tend to go towards classical art – not contemporary. However, I do have a couple of pieces that are contemporary, they are beautiful. I mean – anything that appeals to me and touches me I like. But I do prefer classical art.

MM: Favorite playwright?

ND: Oh, pretty much anything that speaks to me and touches me. There are some

young playwrights who are incredibly talented. And we do productions of their plays in our theatre. But in terms of favorites – well, Tennessee Williams – that’s the classical, terrific theatre. But as I said, the new work at MRT is just amazing too! Some authors are very young, and great.

MM: I think it must be a wonderful feeling to go to a performance in “your” theatre – be part of the audience, observe everything and think and know how much work and effort has gone into it and still – how much work and effort it requires! And there you are – watching a great production with great actors...How does it feel?

ND: I don’t think about it. Not at all. It’s something I have done for a long time and continue to do. So it’s just part of my life. Other people do other things. I do this.

MM: I think it must be particularly gratifying to hear people talk about it, to read all those great reviews. It goes back to the issue we discussed - the importance of the arts in a society.

ND: Absolutely. Of course, with different plays different feelings come out. Every play you see makes you think, even if I really dislike a play – it still makes me think. I have emotions about it. I think one of the nice things is when you’re in an audience, you’re experiencing the same thing in many different ways. Some may love the play and they will say: what a great play! And I may look at them and say – what? It was terrible! And such discussions are just great – they make you think in different ways, they make you question. We learn a lot about ourselves as human beings. It brings out a lot of different emotions and attitudes in different people. And that kind of inclusiveness and diversity is not only great but needed and necessary to live in a society that is complete.

MM: I imagine you sitting here, in your beautiful home, in the evening – thinking you’ve been having a good life...

ND: Fantastic life!

MM: So what makes you happy?

ND: Almost everything makes me happy! (followed by a happy laugh). I'm a happy person – if anything negative comes my way, I may dwell on it for a minute – but then I just throw it over my shoulder and move ahead... So I do not carry a lot of negativity with me. Of course all of us get upset about certain things, but I prefer to turn negative into positive. I'm happy when my family is around. My son Philip and my bachelor son Daniel are around, with me, all the time, and I enjoy that. Philip's positive vibes are everywhere. I am generally a happy person.

MM: What satisfies you?

ND: When I accomplish something – even if it is something small – like making soup (Nancy starts heartily laughing - upon my arrival to her house, Nancy showed me her kitchen and explained she was cooking soup.) Cooking a good meal makes me happy. Staying active, doing things – going out, being involved in the community makes me happy. So many things and people make me happy!

MM: What irritates you?

ND: Stupidity, negativity, people who are negative...

MM: What or who makes you laugh?

ND: You!

(At this point, we both burst out laughing. Nancy is the most genuine person I know – whomever she interacts with she gives her full attention to. She is truly, genuinely interested in other human beings.)

MM: What is your guilty pleasure?

ND: Chocolate chip ice cream with nuts.

MM: What do you strongly dislike?

ND: What I really dislike is Donald Trump – really strongly. What really makes me upset is the inequity of wealth in this country. That really, really upsets me and I feel frustrated that I can't do anything about it.

MM: Nancy – but you do a whole lot about it!! Every day!! With your time, volunteering and money!! I wish there were more people who would have the same beliefs and actually did as much about it as you do, Nancy!

ND: ...it's very frustrating to see the inequity go on. It's so blatant. I don't know why we can't correct it?

MM: Perhaps the pure, hungry greed of those who have a lot and still want more – plays a role?

ND: Yes, the greed! Just think how the world could be easily changed if there were not so many greedy people! Well, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet give billions away – so they're trying....but we need tons of those people... You know I rent a condo in Florida where I spent winters. When the hurricane came off the coast of Florida last year (2017), on the news, you saw a lot of beautiful, large homes destroyed – all I cared about were those people not covered that much by the media: those who had so little to begin with and were left with absolutely nothing. I cared about people and families who live in trailer parks. They have so little, they have no insurance – they are overlooked. All the well-off people have insurance – no need to worry. If the man on the top is all about profits – then what can you expect from the society as a whole? I say to all my kids and my grandkids – you don't have to worry about the whole big world; worry about your little world – how you can make a difference in your little world. It may not be much – it may be opening a door for somebody, or smiling, or doing something unexpected. If everyone took care of his or her own little world, this entire world would be a better place. You know, I go back to Philip, who is the prime example of taking care of his little world that he makes better. We were somewhere just a few days ago and a woman with a cane was trying to get up a few stairs and Philip jumps right up to her and helps her up the stairs. It made her smile - that stayed with her for a day or so; she felt better. He does that all the time. So if Philip does it all the time, it is his nature – it should be easy for us to make this world better – if only all of us cared enough.

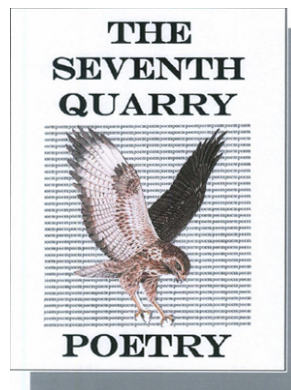
Suddenly, there was a commotion by the door – and I heard: “Time to go, momsie. A little bit more action and a little bit less talking.” Nancy's son Philip was

standing in the doorway, waiting to be driven to his work. And so I got to meet this lovely man with whom I had a very nice, even if only short, conversation. The best ending to this interview.



Nancy and President John F. Kennedy © 2018 Nancy Donahue

Conversation conducted by Miriam Margala



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THE SEVENTH QUARRY SWANSEA POETRY MAGAZINE

aims to publish quality poems from around the world. Poets from the U.K., Albania, America, Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Belarus, Canada, Catalonia, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Holland, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Sicily, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland have already appeared in its pages. New York's Vince Clemente, as the magazine's Consultant Editor: America, ensures a steady stream of American poets.

Each issue features a Poet Profile, a batch of pages given over to a chosen poet. There is also a Books and Magazines page, which provides details and brief comments on received publications.

The magazine is a cooperating partner with Stanley H. Barkan's Cross-Cultural Communications publishing company, New York. The partnership has already contributed to the magazine being displayed at several prestigious literary events in America and the publication in the magazine of work by the late, Pulitzer Prize-winner Stanley Kunitz.

The magazine is contracted to The Poetry Library's (Royal Festival Hall, London) prestigious digitisation project, which ensures copies of the magazine are featured on its very popular website: regarded by many as the best source for poetry in the U.K. EBSCO (USA) archives digitised copies of each issue of the magazine. The magazine was featured in THE GUARDIAN, one of Britain's leading daily newspapers, in April 2006. It was also awarded SECOND BEST SMALL PRESS MAGAZINE IN THE U.K. 2006 by PURPLE PATCH (U.K.).

The editor has organised THE SEVENTH QUARRY PRESENTS poetry evenings. The first, at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea, featured a visit by American poet Stanley H. Barkan. In its collaboration with Cross-Cultural Communications, The Seventh Quarry Press has organised several international festivals, which have taken place at the Dylan Thomas Theatre, Swansea.

The magazine is now 64-88 pages and appears twice a year, in Winter/Spring and Summer/Autumn. It costs £4.50 per issue or £9 for a year's subscription (two copies). \$15 and \$30 for USA subscribers. Further information at www.peterthabitjones.com

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THEY

searched for us after the moon crazily eclipsed
the sun and an ox-bow lake froze in mid-August.
It was if our world was tilting on its axis.

The women and children were first.
Terrified by these unexpected visitors
Screams and wails were shellburst

exploding riddling the carcasses
of the recently killed. The bravest
in our tiny enclave displayed a pathetic thirst.

And as the charcoal embers sizzled
and spat from the fire each was transformed
into a furious wasp on our behalf

attempting to seek a puny redress
as any diminishing courage we still possessed
had been stung, rendered defenceless.

The moans of three of our noblest warriors
lingered at a location we were unable to caress.
How could we begin to make recompense?

Some fellow, tattooed with a heavy moustache
grabbed a wooden handed iron blade and thrust
towards a torso already disintegrating into ash.

What, as a coyote howled, were we fighting against?
Should our dead perversely feel blessed?
Intransigent ghouls and demons and gloating ghosts?

John-Christoper Johnson England

CLUDEO – A MODERN VERSION

The corpse is a terrible mess.
Mutilated beyond disfiguration, it has
Literally been blown to smithereens.

Gruesomely – close your eyes now
if you prefer – it is decapitated.
Some of the suspects seem to have fled.

Colonel Mustard with his waxed
Boer War moustache,
The Reverend Green grinning

like Billy Bunter in a dog-collar,
Miss Scarlett so smug and self-effacing
she reminds me of Eva Marie Saint

in Hitchcock's film 'North by Northwest'.
The lead piping and revolver both
are clumsily visible and which imbecile

has left the dagger protruding from
a pot of geraniums
placed in the conservatory?

Quite frankly, that's inept considering
today's cellular forensics.
Eager detectives, already at the scene,

might construe an Easter, Christmas
and birthday gift have miraculously
converged arriving simultaneously.

I think they're mistaken. Mrs. Peacock,
eyes staring crazily, is crumpled
in her wicker chair, her form is reminiscent

of a body distorted by a hall of mirrors,
medics and a bald pastor attend her.
Whoever committed this horrific act must be
insane, in all likelihood not a single shred of evidence
will be discovered – any clues retrieved will lie
elsewhere in cities such as Paris, Brussels, and Berlin.

John-Christopher Johnson England

OTHER ANGELS

She walks like an angel,
She talks like an angel,
but my, oh my,
She's like the Devil in disguise.

Elvis Presley

With junkies' veins and floaty mops of hair
they squint through heavy clouds of smoky weed
in big boy shirts like bikers used to wear.
The cops claim they're the go-to guys for Speed.
Chisellers carved them once to show how rejects
enter Paradise: with banners, a wreath,
home-made haloes, a joke-shop wing effect.
They set their smile aside and hide their teeth.
That's how they hold a breath in Angel Art
and practise kneeling at the throne as if
measuring up a safe to blow apart.
Theirs is the easy way to live, a whiff
of sulphur from the Pit, a stash they took.
Who hears the Devil's side? God wrote the book.

F.J. Williams England

THE “Z” FILE

They'd gone for good, the dodo and the auk
except in Scrabble where they score.
A plastic backbone snakes across the board
in vertebrae, a bigger word for spine.
A blank tile brings a flowering in the mind,
an easy Buddha shuffles in, lies down
between the booby and ice-cream.
What smarter way to lose, the single Z
pulled from the pile by fingertip?
I look along my cuticle and see
the words move up and down, not left to right:
so stories start and vanish, stick out like a fracture.
I show my ten-point Z that none can use
that slid around the board and slithered back
and called to me to slot it on my rack.

F.J. Williams England

THE POLLY GARTER THING

Nothing grows in our garden, only washing. And babies. And where's their fathers
live, my love? Over the hills and far away. You're looking up at me now. I know
what you're thinking, you poor little milky creature. You're thinking, you're no
better than you should be, Polly, and that's good enough for me. Oh, isn't life a
terrible thing, thank God?

Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*

I had never heard the phrase ‘love him back’ before, and thought it a wonderfully
good one; it seems to imply exactly the comradely feeling of Polly, with the real
loved one far away.

William Empson, *Selected Letters*, ed. John Haffenden

The Polly Garter thing: she loved them back.
No fake romantic stuff, just treat them nice.
She'd love them back with all their joys and woes.

All part of it, a good time in the sack
Then pillow-talk for comfort or advice,
With certain extras laid on if they chose.

They said, her lovelies, that she'd got the knack
Of knowing every time just how to spice
Things up as consolation for who knows

What disappointments, shattered dreams, or lack
Of spicings-up elsewhere. It had its price
For her, their heading homeward at the close

Of each love-meeting, but she'd quickly pack
Them off and so ensure no sacrifice
Of their domestic peace or night's repose.

Their good wives said 'That nymphomaniac,
That hussy, Polly Garter!', but thought twice
Before they let the issue come to blows.

Much better cut those errant males some slack,
They thought, and let the local floozy splice
Their sexless marriages than interpose

With some ill-judged, hysterical attack
The news of which would get out in a trice
And do the gossip-round of friends and foes.

What if a homely piece of bric-a-brac
Went walkabout since suited to entice
Sweet Polly Garter, or the finest rose

Was plucked before time so some anorak
Enjoyed her favours? Call it sin or vice
By all means but the debt your virtue owes

To her suggests you redirect the flak
Away from that brief share of paradise
Her loving-back makes possible to those

With love-lives twisted badly out of whack
By Milk Wood rectitude. Call it a slice
Of life instead, since that description goes

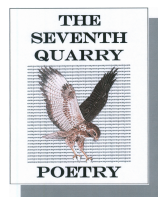
Flat contrary to attitudes that smack
Of sex gone wrong, or men reduced to mice,
Or every like pathology that shows

The worm in virtue's bud. A change of tack
With her as guiding spirit might suffice
To let you feel how Polly's touch bestows

More blessings through its aphrodisiac
Love-ministry than all the merchandise
Long peddled by assorted holy joes.

Christopher Norris Wales

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HAIBUN -

Bones

I pick up my roleplay gamebook, *Creature of Havoc**, recommencing the story on the flying ship, the Galleykeep. It's been a long slog getting to this perilous point; I've died many times and the dice have not been kind. Pursuing hobgoblins have driven me below deck in search of the evil necromancer, Zharradan Marr. Standing in the hallway, I have a choice of five doors, each adorned with a symbol. I choose the door with the crossed swords on it.

poor choice
made in haste...
the door closes

The room beyond is full of specimen jars and bookshelves with a skeleton hanging on a hook in the corner. I ring the bell on the desk. No-one responds, so I begin to scan the anatomical books on the shelves. I'm startled by a clicking voice behind me; that of the ship's skeletal physician, Doctor Quimmel Bone, now off his hook. Immediately suspicious, I rush to attack him and manage a quick victory due to several favourable rolls of the dice. With the bones of the vanquished physician lying lifeless on the floor, I decide to leave the cursed study. To my surprise, Quimmel's bones intertwine and the re-animated doctor leaps forward with two surgical knives. After defeating him again, the physician's bones weave back into the perfect skeletal form and he re-engages in combat. Weary, I win the duel, before Quimmel's bones rise from the floor and he lunges forward once more....

deja-vu...
some battles
are unending

**inspired by Steve Jackson's fantasy roleplay book 'Creature of Havoc (1986)'*

Tim Gardiner England

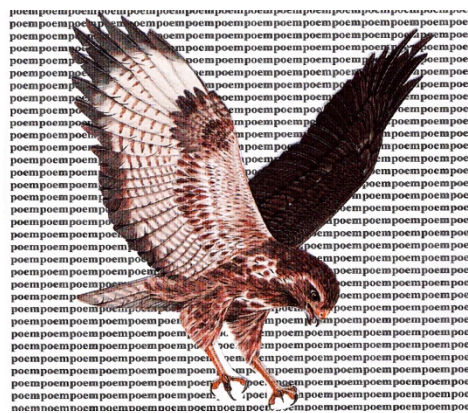
TANKA PROSE -

Rehab

The causeway winds from the grassy seawall to Skipper's Island, steps treacherous as the tide licks swiftly across suffocating seaweed. Reaching the other shore, we sit on a raised hummock of couch-grass. She talks of the night we rowed through a calm sea glowing with diatoms and midnight walks through the rank island pastures searching for Fisher's rare moth. The come down from those heady days has been long and brutal; the illness a cycle of extremes. Quite oblivious to our conversation, a curlew injects ochre mud.

a lapwing spirals...
the only solace
during this addiction
salt marsh purple
with sea-lavender

Tim Gardiner England



LOOK OUT FOR ISSUE 28: Summer/Autumn 2018

WALES: Gareth Culshaw, Robert Nisbet, Byron Beynon, Jean Salkilld, Jessica Newport, Christopher Norris

ENGLAND: Natalie Crick, John White, Clive Donovan, Simon Fletcher, CM Buckland, Matt Duggan, Grant Tabard, Stephen Philip Druce, Andy Hickman, Ann Flynn, Charles Wilkinson, Geraldine Bell, J.S. Watts, John-Christopher Johnson, F.J. Williams, Tim Gardiner

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“The morning poet came early
like a worm waiting to be devoured
by very early birds hungry for words.”

from MORNING POET by STANLEY H. BARKAN

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