

THE SEVENTH QUARRY



POETRY

ISSUE TWENTY-TWO
SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015
SWANSEA POETRY MAGAZINE

THE



SEVENTH



QUARRY

SWANSEA POETRY MAGAZINE



ISSUE 22
SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015

EDITORIAL
ISSUE TWENTY-TWO
SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015

This twenty-second issue features work from America, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, England, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Northern Ireland, Sweden, and Wales. It includes interviews with Wales' Christopher Norris, literary critic and poet, and Bulgarian writers Vantzeti Vassilev and Bissera Videnova. There is also a fascinating article by America's John Hart.

The collaboration between The Seventh Quarry Press and Stanley H. Barkan's Cross-Cultural Communications, New York, continues into 2015. We have recently co-published THE RED OF LIFE by renowned Czech poet Theofil Halama.

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

© 2015 The copyright of the individual poems, articles, photos, and artwork published remains with the authors.

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

Published by The Seventh Quarry Press

ISSN 1745-2236

Address: 8 Cherry Crescent, Parc Penderri, Penllergaer, Swansea SA4 9FG,
Wales, UK

info@peterthabitjones.com

£4.50 per issue or £9 annual subscription/\$15 or \$30 USA (please make UK
cheques out to Peter Thabit Jones/USA: International Money Orders required)

**PLEASE NOTE: The price and subscription increases. These are
the first increases in ten years.**

Contributors receive a complimentary copy of the magazine

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
Coupons



Peter Thabit Jones

(photo © 2015 Robert L. Harrison)



Vince Clemente

(photo © 2015 Anne Clemente)

JAZZ SEQUINS

and sometimes
there were birds
singing at the night
birds on poles, doin' tin time

wires across the sky
carrying music
equalizer waves
ocean ripples
berries of treasure
a stem to tie the currants
to earth's axis
spinning tunes
as dreamers do

there is a blue jazz beat
a rhythm of river hearts
a flowing aorta of star sprays
in our solar plexus

and we have composed
every song that was ever written
simply by hearing it

and they sent you away
you, who loved the hills and meadows
banging in your head
they said
that you said
there were singular moons
and they said you were crazy

and very late in the evenings
where junkies and protests

are the remotest problems of the universe
and the only task should be
on our dream minds
watching a fly walking the designs of wallpaper
on our dream minds
what happens when people die?
energy is never lost
just subtracted and changed
buried in symmetry

Gloria Keeley America

WEeping WINDOW

With a misty look
this window weeps
as fall just
happened

fall's misfortune
for trees
showing themselves naked
with their branches
embraced and the greyness
dripping from the eyes
of lost people
passing by

March 24 2014

Huguette Bertrand Canada

RAS YR WYDDFA

Stand at the start and visualise
the top: a swift wing's beat above
pause and hunch, in a bunch
of bodies heel flicks and elbows

one glance stolen, a gasp of sky
to carry you through the battering ram of
tarmac. The gun went
half a mile ago and you're out, away

on your own, tapping a route stone
to stone and the heat beats
up off the lime bricks and where
to put the next step – here

or there and sometime you're aware
the wind lifts a hand
to give you a nudge so you open up
and float for a brief airborne

second or two then you're down
and the ground falls
away on your right – you sense
the drop but you can't afford

to look for the glare
and the straggle of hair splinters
the light and the rock
turns to shale so you're up

on your toes and the arches
curve

taut in your

feet and the top slides out of
sight in the haze and the gradient shifts
so you're back on your heels
with your hands on your quads
and through your quads the red grit burns

but through red grit the mountains
swerve and now there's a space

that's winnowing out –
borne of the conquest, sprung from its dust.

Olivia Walwyn England

SHORT SHRIFT

Caught short in drained Hackney Marshes
beside the river Lea, I pushed into spiky bushes,
dry autumn leaves catching in my hair.
And there, crouching, I was brought up short
by a flash of rufous – a fox stalking something
indeterminate. Peering through the twigs
I saw it pounce: russet on grey. It raised its pointed head
and stared at me, a limp rat hanging from its mouth.
I thought, 'It's unconcerned.' And then, 'What do I know
of how it feels? It's killed its prey, and that is that.
No point in hackneyed phrases (Nature, red in tooth and claw),
however apt. Especially here.' I looked it in the eye.
It shrugged (or twitched) and then loped off, lithe and ginger.
A skein of geese flew honking overhead.

Deborah Mason England

DOORS

The old doors between us
used to swing back and forth,
squeaking loose on their hinges.
We laughed and propped them open –
let the air flow through.

Later we installed sliding doors.
They moved along set grooves,
grating against each other
at times, but never derailing.
We left them open less often.

And then we fitted solid doors.
Energy-efficient, they were closed
to keep heat in. Their hinges
were stiff. You had to push.
Sometimes you had to knock.

Now we've added bolts and locks.
Finding the keys takes time.
Soon the notices will go up:
Access prohibited. No loitering.
With or without intent.

Deborah Mason England

The Colour of Saying - an anthology inspired by a Dylan Thomas Competition organized by Peter Thabit Jones and Anne Pelleschi, in collaboration with Stanley H. Barkan, as part of the Dylan Thomas Centenary in 2014. Contributors range from ten years-old to seventy years-old and represent many countries throughout the world. The anthology also includes translations of Dylan Thomas's *The Hunchback in the Park* by international translators. Cross-Cultural Communications, USA/The Seventh Quarry Press, UK. **Price £9/\$15**

OUTSIDE THE STUDIO OF A PROMINENT DEAD NORWEGIAN SCULPTOR, OSLO

Sinuuousness is smoothly cut in stone

The model, shapely, soon becomes the wife; another one, the mistress, then the wife

[Repeat three times] And now the carver, fat and famous, meets up with his Maker

The carver left much sinuousness in stone

At carver's end, though, ex-wives have their say:

The final stone that bears his name is crude and straight and plain in every way.

Lance Nizami America

EMPTYING

Key

A key to a storage space

On a brooding clouded greyed-out day, a lockup that's garage-sized

Red doors, white concrete

Rows side-by-side identical, and in-between, the rain-soaked tarmac

Key

A dirty key, brass and rigid

Held in-between my fingers, at which I stare, and hope for insight

Standing on that tarmac, ponder, wait for curiosity

To overcome the dread of inserting it in that brass lock

Key

The key to getting through this

To free each object, know its place in my sad, sad childhood history

To face each memory full head-on, dispose of them all one-by-one

The total contents of that gloomy cold unfeeling storage space.

Lance Nizami America

THE LAKE LIES

The lakes lies;
don't others detest the sight
of their reflection in the lake?
Love is for elegant couples
passing through the park,
with its tall trees and rockery
and swans, so demure,
curved necks wrapped
so tightly together.
Laughing lovers do not see
the lonely hunchback
sitting by the lake's edge.
Long hours by the fountain
from dawn to the bell, alone,
but for the mocking attention
of boys who are too young to hate.
One day soon, the beast will be
released from tight chains;
free as the winter wind
whipping though tall trees;
free as the breadcrumbs
tumbling from claw-like hands;
free as the swans gliding
across the surface of still water.

Inspired by Dylan Thomas's *The Hunchback in the Park*

Tim Gardiner England

DARK ENERGY

The day's frail light
slips down proud domes,
a chill February wind
harasses chestnut leaves.
I've been here before,
alone, with endless galaxies
and unfathomable light years.
This time a dark energy
acts on my soul. Ceaseless
gravity draws us closer,
tiny planets spiralling
around a black hole.
Just a chance occurrence,
meaningless in the universe's
unknown fate, but so vital
to midnight stargazers.
To think love could survive,
through millennia, matter
which is neither destroyed,
nor created, but exists
only for itself. I leave
with so many questions
unanswered, the only thing
for sure, Venus shall rise tonight.

Tim Gardiner England

A LADY'S HEART

Distant scarecrows
waving in the wind,
beckon us uphill
to the tall tower.

Inside, a lady's heart,
dust, entombed within
a heart-shaped casket
which never opens.
Secrets buried deep
beneath the organ,
in earth she can trust
more than flesh.

Note: Inspired by Erwarton Church, Shotley, Suffolk where Anne Boleyn's heart is allegedly buried.

Tim Gardiner England

ARENIG, NORTH WALES

after the painting by J D Innes (1887-1914)

Viewed from Nant-Ddu
the painter sharpens his skills,
his palette alive with ideas
quenches the canvas.
Circles of a lake and the constant
mountain gazing
silently with clouds
almost touching.
Convalescing in unison
with rock and water,
the veins of a tree
celebrating the source of indefinable
nature where no words
need to grow.

Byron Beynon Wales

COLERIDGE ON SCAFELL

He speaks his mind
in a Devonshire accent,
leaves home on a Sunday
morning for nine days
to walk around the Lake District.
He disregards the weather,
has no professional guide,
his thoughts high
on fresh air,
freedom and adventure.
He sees the wild, green panorama,
a sunset viewed from a sheepfold
with dreams for company.
A letter written on Scafell,
bruised ink on paper,
the thundery forecast
in a life,
with those clouds
that came from the sea.

Byron Beynon Wales

TWO FIGURES IN A DISTANT LANDSCAPE

I think of us as travellers, not tourists,
but know, the thought submerged,
she loves normal, wants to settle, work,
while I thrill to romantic readiness.
I pay homage to history's cause and effect,
can't know these days will be cherished
as she continues in the rowdy present,
dubious about time wasted on reminiscence.

Norwegian Customs open the boot, discover
family trees patterning scrolled art paper.
They laid bare our kangaroo-decorated van
for contraband to match my hippie look,
now seem baffled by my drug of choice,
the back-stories of this calligraphy,
but honesty is apparent in her clear eyes
so maladroit officials wave us through.

Inside a thin tent we sleep, two spoons
in a meadow near signposted Viking graves.
In summer's airy morning light I crawl out,
realise tilted time is only four o'clock.
She rinses smalls, gets her meths stove going.
That day gone, gone, we drove through tunnels
bearing the weight of massive mountains,
her at the wheel, me the dreamy navigator.

Ian C Smith Australia

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Straight from our first tutorial hands touch
reaching for the same book reference card.
We step aside, after you-ing, laughing,
careless of the shrapnel of future memories.

A chance moment, novelesque,
so I believe shrugging loneliness,
libraries cathedrals to my belief
with me on a pilgrimage.

Over coffee, glib biographies,
I am grateful for blossoming friendship
despite disappointment, some shame,
knowing she will never be heart-quickenning.

In crowded lectures she finds me
even if I slip in late to obscured seats.
She emerges from behind pillars.
I walk fast, head down, her heels wobbling.

We read about appeasement, dishonesty.
My electives always become hers.
I sign lists then later cross out my name
but she reads me like a beginner's book.

After *Tess* I take her, use her wretchedly.
She thrills to this though hates it.
Same for me until I meet someone,
relationships at the heart of everything.

Ian C Smith Australia

SQUALID SIGHTS

A man lies on the sidewalk
drunk, ill, dead,
we do not know.
His swollen, red flesh
scabbed with dirt, sores, pus,
other excrescences,
emits noxious odors
making us hurry past,
refusing to stop
to see if he needs help.

Gary Beck America

TORTUROUS MUSIC

The city complex,
a maelstrom of sounds
diversely expressed
by instrumentation
mechanical, vocal,
an urban opera
melodic, discordant,
playing overtly,
surreptitiously,
penetrating residents
whether they notice, or not.

Gary Beck America

DVD

THE POET, THE HUNCHBACK, AND THE BOY

a short drama by Peter Thabit Jones

performed by Swansea Little Theatre actors,
produced and directed by Dreena Morgan-Harvey
of the Dylan Thomas Theatre, Swansea, Wales

Filmed by Franco De Marco of Holly Tree Productions, Wales

A collaboration between the Dylan Thomas Theatre
and The Seventh Quarry Press

Already performed live in Wales and London

Price: £10/\$20

REVERSE RECOVERY

One had recovered the sunken
underwater city and repositioned it
on dry ground using the most sophisticated
and advanced methods.

There, the city with all its glory
was supposed to find countless admirers,
to reveal its mystery and to
tell of its inhabitants.

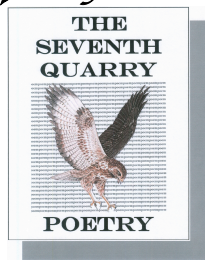
Then, however, an unforeseen calamity occurred,
as if a curse from the time of emergence
would have fulfilled – pronounced
to avoid the salvage and preserve the mystery.

He had to bring the city
back to its original location.

Mother would otherwise have made too big
a drama out of the matter when she,
being invited to visit the new location
on the floor of the nursery, noticed the
bath water that seeped from the
interstices of the Lego bricks.

Alex Deppert Germany

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry



THE SEVENTH QUARRY SWANSEA POETRY MAGAZINE

aims to publish quality poems from around the world. Poets from the U.K., America, Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Belarus, Canada, Catalonia, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Holland, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, 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. The policy is to try to alternate between a British poet and a non-British poet. There is also a Books and Magazines page, which provides details and brief comments on received publications.

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

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

The editor also organises THE SEVENTH QUARRY PRESENTS poetry evenings. The first, at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea, featured a visit by American poet Stanley H. Barkan.

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

Editor: Peter Thabit Jones info@peterthabitjones.com

Consultant Editor, America: Vince Clemente

SALT AND ITS POLITE USE

I gazed at the excess salt grains
On the bevelled edge of my china plate.
Some distant place indentured miners,
Wretched debtors and the bravest
Stubborn critics of the strong-hand state
Had levered off great slabs and blocks
For drovers to drag unhappy caravans
Of poor bleeding
Saddle-sore mules and donkeys led over
Steppes and deserts,
Trickling down ravines
To busy quays,
To overseas...
...Sacks, packets, supermarkets...

'Don't Sprinkle!' Dad commanded,
Cutting dead the epic run
Of this, my saline melodrama.

You had to make an extravagant mound,
Dab your dinner-tipped fork-tines
Delicately in.
That was the correct and polite way.
Such a lavish waste of a slavish day,
A donkey's life.

Clive Donovan England

Interview with Christopher Norris, poet and literary critic



Christopher Norris © 2015 Christopher Norris

Christopher Norris is Distinguished Research Professor in Philosophy at the University of Cardiff, Wales. He has written more than thirty books on aspects of philosophy and literary theory, among them *Badiou's Being and Event: a reader's guide*, and *Re-Thinking the Cogito: naturalism, reason and the venture of thought*. His volume of verse-essays *The Cardinal's Dog and Other Poems* was recently published in a second edition by The Seventh Quarry Press together with De La Salle University Press, Philippines.

Peter Thabit Jones: *When did you first start writing poems and who would you say influenced your work at the time?*

Christopher Norris: Well, I used to write poetry in my early years but it rather dried up when I became an academic, as I think happens to many people, especially (and sadly) those who teach English Literature. I started again about five years ago – just why would be difficult to say, although it's become my main

writing activity (instead of academic books and articles) and a central part of my life. Influences? William Empson principally, as much through his criticism (that wonderful book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*) as his poetry. Also Philip Larkin, the ‘Movement’ poets, Donald Davie, Elizabeth Bishop, John Fuller, Peter Porter, U.A. Fanthorpe, and my late, much lamented friend Douglas Houston, whose example – now I come to think of it – probably got me started again. The Australian poet A.D. Hope was a very late discovery – just last year – but he’s already made quite an impression. And then of course there is Auden, whose impact was huge and who amazes me every time I open the *Collected Poems*. These writers are all very ‘formal’, as present-day poetry goes, and I suppose most of them would count as ‘intellectual’ in terms of theme and approach, although that wouldn’t go so much for Larkin Anyway this will give you some idea.

PTJ: *You are a poet who constantly utilizes rhyme. Do you apply end rhymes to ensure your poems have instant structure and a musicality? Or do you feel the philosophical aspects of your work unfold more clearly via such formality?*

CN: Yes, rhyme and meter – I’m an unashamed, unregenerate formalist! I sometimes come under fire for that at poetry-readings, especially conferences and academic events, when people say ‘you used to take all those avant-garde positions in literary theory – poststructuralist, deconstructive, and so forth – and here you are now writing poems that rhyme and scan’. I can see their point, and there is definitely a tension there, though not (I think) a flat contradiction. There is a problem, for me at least, with the kind of contemporary poetry that is written under the direct influence of theory, or written in direct response to post-structuralist ideas, such as some of the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry by people like Charles Bernstein, Steve McCaffery and Ron Silliman. The problem – again for me – is that it reads like a loosened up, free-verse rendering of something that might just as well have been composed as a prose piece and published in a theory journal. This is mainly because these poets have absorbed the post-structuralist idea that rhyme and meter – especially anything like iambic pentameter – are just relics of a clapped-out ‘bourgeois-humanist’ poetic tradition which can only be challenged by dumping all such formalities. I disagree completely – I’d say that rhyme is a great exploratory device since it helps, sometimes forces, poet and reader to think against their common-sense, naturalised, plain-prose habits of thought. And the same goes for meter, which free-verse practitioners think of as something hopelessly outmoded, like a straitjacket or maybe a Victorian corset. Actually it lets you do amazingly subtle and suggestive things when it plays against natural speech-rhythms, or when they play against it.

To go back to your question: my point is that it doesn't really come down to a *choice* between the 'philosophical aspects' of poetry (or my poetry) and the 'musical' qualities of rhyming and metrical verse. The two things can perfectly well go together, sometimes in a fairly straightforward way where (like Pope says) the sound is 'an echo to the sense', and sometimes through effects of contrast or dissonance. This is why really tight verse-forms, like that of the villanelle, can often achieve highly musical effects – and they'd better, with all those repeated rhyming refrains! – but can also be used, as by Empson, to put across some quite complex arguments. It works best when the arguments are based on extended metaphors, or structures of analogy, so that the rhyme-scheme and metrical effects become part of a larger pattern. So I tend to use quite elaborate forms – villanelles, terza rima (a favourite for long verse-essays!), quatrains of various kinds, double sonnets, sometimes sestinas (strict ones – a real challenge), or other kinds of technically challenging structure that I come across when reading around. Here again Auden is the great inspiration for his sheer versatility and formal inventiveness.

The musicality question is interesting because I do enjoy reading these pieces aloud and have done a lot of poetry-readings just recently, in this country and abroad. Some have been in the form of verse-lectures at academic conferences – long poems about philosophers and on various literary, historical, or (sometimes) political themes. This might not sound like the sort of thing that would go down well in public performance, and of course the fact that I enjoy it doesn't mean that the audience will! I always preface the poems with a bit of introductory chat so as to explain any out-of-the-way allusions or hard-to-follow passages of argument. That also applies to the vexed question of whether poets should supply informative or explanatory notes when there's a likelihood that readers might find themselves stretched beyond the limits of unaided comprehension. Here again I take Empson's line: put them in – it's a courtesy to the reader (saves them the time spent searching around, even with Google to hand). But, to come back to your question, one must keep the verse-music going as well as the formal and intellectual challenge so that they don't lose interest and simply give up.

PTJ: *Do you show your unpublished work to anyone for critical feedback?*

CN: Yes, to various people, depending on the kind of poem and who I think might enjoy it, or (more selfishly) who might offer the best, most relevant and helpful feedback. I can't pretend that I receive all criticism with perfect equanimity or deep gratitude! But a lot of it is very useful, whether in pointing out things that need improvement or making me feel more confident that there aren't too many of them. Doug Houston, whom I mentioned earlier, used to be the greatest source of both kinds of help but, alas, is no longer there to look discerningly but benevolently over my shoulder. I like trying my stuff out on all sorts of people - students, colleagues, family-members, friends, the regular turners-up at our local Rhyme and Real Ale pub sessions – anyone who will listen, basically, rather like the Ancient Mariner.

PTJ: *What do you think are the negatives and positives of contemporary poetry?*

CN: Positives: the sheer amount and variety of it, and the fact that it happens in all sorts of places – in pubs, for instance, so that you can drop in on a weekly or monthly poetry evening at a pub in most cities or towns and expect to hear at least a few really good poems. Negatives: the prevalence of non-verse poetry that doesn't, like the best free verse, make its point by audibly or noticeably breaking with received forms but which simply shuts out the possibility of rhyme and meter. This sort of thing turns up all over the place, from the pubs to high-class journals like the *London Review of Books* where the review-articles are often much better written – even at times more poetic – than the sorts of poetry they typically publish. The metropolitan literary culture seems to have taken a collective decision that anything remotely formal – anything that shows a bit of technical competence – must be hopelessly behind the times and likely to damage sales figures. Have you maybe detected a certain asperity about these remarks? Well, you're right!

PTJ: *The Seventh Quarry Press has co-published the second edition of your collection The Cardinal's Dog with De La Salle University Publisher in the Philippines. How would you summarise some of your intentions in the book?*

CN: I wanted to write a sequence of long poems, with a few shorter pieces interspersed, that would make the case for a certain kind of 'new formalism' (although of course that case has been made before). My idea was also to revive a nowadays neglected verse-form, that of the philosophical verse-essay – or verse-epistle – that had its heyday in England during the eighteenth century. I don't know how far I succeeded in either aim but I very much enjoyed trying. So that's the big-picture motivation, if you like. But the poems came to me one by one, often as a

result of ideas I'd had or things I'd been thinking about on and off for some time but which now – what made all the difference – somehow became associated with a certain mood and a certain complex of images, sounds, and other sensations. It's a very mysterious sort of process, so talking about my 'intentions' in the book feels rather odd. And yet of course there were very definite intentions – some of which I have mentioned already – which do invite that kind of question, and which make those poems, in some respects, more deliberate than most in terms of conscious intent. Another purpose, by the way, was to show by example that images or visual metaphors weren't the only valid poetic currency since there also existed a poetry of grammar – to pinch a phrase from Donald Davie - that did comparably vivid and striking things with complex grammatical or syntactic constructions. So that was intentional enough, that way of sustaining sentences over a long verse-period, though of course not just for the sake of it but always to make some definite point. I feel I've rather beat about the bush in this answer but that just reflects my difficulty in explaining how motives, reasons and intentions come in when we're talking about poetry.

PTJ: *What are your future plans with regard to your poetry?*

Well, I have a couple of books on the go at the moment, one of which is a another volume of verse-essays, again fairly formal in style but less academic and rather more topical in its range of themes and interests. I hope that this will be another joint venture by The Seventh Quarry Press and De La Salle Publishers in the Philippines. The other is a collection of pieces in the newly invented genre of 'creative criticism', entitled *The Winnowing Fan* and commissioned for a series edited by John Schad of Lancaster University. That one is scheduled for publication in mid-to-late 2016 by Bloomsbury. Beyond that, who knows? It really depends on how long I keep getting new ideas for poems, or – more to the point – how long the ideas keep happening to coincide with the right sorts of mood and . I'm lucky that it has happened at all so maybe I shouldn't examine the conditions too closely. It would be nice if I could manage one genuinely free-verse production that didn't make me think, as soon as I read it over, that I could easily have changed the wording in any number of detailed ways without serious damage. That's the great beauty of formalism – you revise and revise and then finally you

know for sure when you've got it right. Although of course that doesn't prevent other people from saying 'You got it wrong', or 'That's the wrong kind of thing you were trying to do'.

THE BEAUTY OF IT

I would have preferred to have invented a machine that people could use and that would help farmers with their work – for example, a lawn-mower.

I didn't put it in the hands of bandits and terrorists, and it's not my fault that it has mushroomed uncontrollably across the globe. Can I be blamed that they consider it the most reliable weapon?

Mikhail Kalashnikov

The beauty of it was how it would take
 Apart in twenty seconds flat, reveal
The bare mechanics, never jam or break,
 And so let first-time users get a feel
For how it worked. That's why my gun could make
 Of raw recruits sharp-shooters who can deal
With dicey situations apt to shake
 The nerve of those whose fancy guns conceal
All that mere nuts-and-bolts stuff for the sake
 Of slick appearances or sex-appeal.
They used to ask me: don't you lie awake
 In the small hours and see the blood congeal
On piles of corpses and not share the ache
 Of lost or shattered lives? But since the real
Blame lies with others, not myself, I'll stake
 My case on it: those wounds aren't mine to heal.

* * * * *

Not sleeping well just lately; it's my own
Now close-up death makes what I've done acquire
Such haunting power. There's that discomfort-zone,
That moral no-man's-land where those who fire
And kill bear no more guilt, if truth be known,
Than those like me who aimed a good bit higher,
Strove for invention's accolade alone,
And so bid conscience happily retire
As long as my invention helped postpone
My day of reckoning. Now they all conspire,
Those untold deaths, so that at last I'm thrown
Into such thoughts as question my entire
Life's work. When I unwrap this thing that's blown
Whole dynasties away my one desire
Is to find some design-fault and atone
For everything the death-squads so admire.

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

ENCOUNTER

I met a moth this morning
When getting on an elevator.
I gave it ready warning
About the fate it would face later.

The light inside looked stronger
Than any seen when doors were parted.
Ride done, I stayed no longer,
But turned to wish moth well, then darted.

Jane Blanchard America

JETSAM AND FLOTSAM

First went the hope chest
Of all the anniversaries
That would never happen,
Then a treasure trove
Of letters sent or received,
Next a stash of photographs
Of people no longer knowable.

Salvage was not possible,
Except for a calendar
Of holidays to be or not to be
With or without children,
As well as a last name
Familiar enough to be kept
Until a better should come along.

Jane Blanchard America

SLOPE

Most often going up is hard
 compared to coming down,
but either inclination can
 induce a smile or frown.

Expression is determined by
 the way a hill is viewed,
perspective that primarily
 depends on attitude.

Jane Blanchard America

AFTERMATH

Footprints are no longer allowed.
Each of us is supposed to come
and go without a remnant of
existence. Not to do so is
believed to be indulgent and
irresponsible. Evidence
of such should be expunged so that
all else can last once we have passed.

Back on the beach again, I nod
at newcomers, speak or wave to
regulars. I wonder if I
am missed when elsewhere. Retracing
my own tracks, I write poetry,
then a brief obituary.

Jane Blanchard America

WHEN DEATH WAS A LITTLE BOY

he spilled blood all over the carpet,
and, no one forgave him except for God
and all the other big-shots who have hardwood.
Jesus placed a rosary of eyes that never close
around his neck. And in his mouth,
the mutilated silence of deaf sparrows
whose broken wings turn like blank pages
against the winds of time.

Death has plenty of time.
He waits patiently among the bruised lilies
with his long sad shadow shading his face
and constantly looking over his shoulder.
He never gets any rest.
He has heavy bags under his eyes
which he must drag along on all those trips
he never takes himself.

Sometimes, you can hear him
rattling around, and around.
But, no one sees Death coming--
only Life, and God
whose rosaries are everywhere.
Once, Death caught a glimpse
of his own reflection in God's eyes
and all his mirrors shattered.
Then, they folded like cracked ice—
tequila on the rocks!
He's still picking up where we left off.

Oh, Death has plenty of time,
only... he could use a little rest--
he looks much worse in person!

Antonia Alexandra Klimenko France

Editor's note: This poem was incomplete when published in Issue 21.

3 HAIKUS FOR DYLAN THOMAS

#DylanDay LAUGHARNE

Heron priested shores
blue waves come and go gently
recalling your name

Under the Welsh sky
only silence inhabits
your seashaken house

The November wind
froze the clay of light and sealed
your blue lips as wax

Lidia Chiarelli Italy

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

THE HUMDRUM CLUB by Peter Rawlings, published by Poetry Salzburg Pamphlet Series #14. Available via www.poetrysalzburg.com A wide range of subjects handled via a careful and very effective use of language. 'Peter Rawlings has an ear for the extraordinary in the ordinary' – John Glover. Price: £5.50 (+£1 p&p), \$9 (+\$1.50 p&p), €6.60 (+ €1 p+p).

WELCOME TO THE THIRD WORLD by Tristram Cooke, published by YPS Publishing. Available via www.yps-publishing.co.uk. Twenty-eight political poems accompanied by appropriate watercolour illustrations. Price: £4.99.

SHEDDING PAPER SKIN by Mike Jenkins, published by Carreg Gwalch. Available via www.carreg-gwalch.com. This new collection offers crafted and engaging poetry powered by an intelligent wit and a genuine passion. Price: £7.50.

AT MY TABLE by Judith Yamamoto, published by Sugartown Publishing. Available via sugartownpublishing.com 'Over the past half-century Judith Yamamoto has been writing highly original poems, only a few of which have found their way into print. This collection should remedy that neglect' – Richard Moore.

HEART/WISDOM AND AWAKENING by Nanna Aida Svendsen, published by Pleasant House Ltd. Available via www.pleasanthouse.com A writer who has distilled her observations of life into focused and wise poems. The simplicity disarms as the poetry

IT LASTS A MOMENT/NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS by Fred Ostrander, published by Sugartown Publishing. Available via sugartownpublishing.com "To read Fred Ostrander is to enter an alternate, intenser world where the great images rule and the tides of the universe palpably life (and drop) us all. Ostrander is one of those poets of whom accomplished poets say, 'I wish I could write like that'" – John Hart. Price: \$19.95.

AMONG THE SHAPES THAT FOLD AND FLY by Patricia Nelson, published by Sugartown Publishing. Available via sugartownpublishing.com 'Patricia Nelson uses words and images like an expressionist painter uses form and color' – Peter Leverich. Price \$15.95.

IN FRAGILITY by Michael Graves, published by Black Buzzard Press. Available from Black Buzzard Press, 3503 Ferguson Lane, Austin, TX 78754, USA. Michael

Graves is close to the thickness of things and the poetry is stark and full of cliff-edge moments. He uses language like a weapon, a weapon that produces very impressive poetry that calls one back to the home of its pages. Price: \$15.95.

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

AFTERTHOUGHT

Perhaps we could meet again at Jumièges;
choose a fine August day, just as before,
when the full ripeness of the fertile land
is grasped by laden boughs of fruitfulness;
we could take that familiar path along the Seine
and wander through the heady groves and stalls
of damson, gage and plum, to where the white
spirit of the abbey touches down.

And in the evening we could eat again
at the delightful Auberge des Ruines
where words we tasted cautiously at first,
we then devoured, Chef's Surprise unfolding
course by course the Cuisine de Normandie!
Choose the corner table, just as before,
and while we savour that memory, perhaps...
perhaps we could meet again at Jumièges...and soon.

Jean Salkilld Wales

SKETCHING

At rocky, remote Strumble Head,
She'd talk to anyone or everyone;
Sitting sketching attracts the stranger.
She lays down her laws, digits wagging,
Counting off the points she makes –
Arms raised, backwards leaning,
Laughing at the seagulls,
Hands spread abroad, merry to the skies –
Blue heavens listen, glistening horizons;
Gulls dive to the basking seals below
In their cove, sunning the rocky shore
A pup splashes its fishy seaweed pools
Its yawning mother, summer blubber filled,
Rolls lazily on this sun-drenched late September day
The bay fishermen up nets to pass the light at Strumble Head
As I too try to sketch
In words.

Ll.H.Nicholas Wales

OUTSIDER

Are the day shadows mimicking your movement and breath
can the outer-self belong to them?
a slaved sameness harboured in popular manacles
where strangers only huddled their own kind.

You swerve from hipster beard and cornflake chin
unplugged from expletive swooning clowns,
a fuse luminous within a crowd.

Only wilderness contorted in smiles
bled you of the kerosene lips that would aggravate

rapping consonants weaved in cliques and doubts,
only the outside would be the terrain that could cradle you.

MJ Duggan England

IN DAYLIGHT

The circular bulb of daylight
flight of a pattering red admiral
gliding in weaves of air and honey sun,

it's beautiful red markers
are like the binding flame of Summer.

Zenith light hounds the rustic stars,
a rounded pebble of moths flee from empty acorn shells
buried in dead rainbow moss.

In daylight we see prayer
to beacons of god in sky of red cirrus

bulbous moon gathering
the cadaver of this oncoming evening.

MJ Duggan England

THE GIFT

In the sweet cradle of sleep
Worries die
Burdens ease
And breathing
Deepens

Such a wonderful gift I'll always keep
Just lie down
And fall asleep

Lolita Ray Sweden

Gåvan

I sömnens ljuvliga vagga
Dör sorlet ut
Bördor lättar
Och andhämtning
Djupnar

Tänk vilken underbar gåva
Bara lägga sig ner
Och sova

Lolita Ray Sweden

BETWEEN GARMENT SIZES

The space between garment sizes
Might seem like a triviality
But is a no man's land
Like ending up on a traffic island
Between red light and red light
It can waste a whole day
Prevent an exciting meeting
Delay or even stop it
Make a whole life change direction

Lolita Ray Sweden

Mellan byxstorlekar

Utrymmet mellan byxstorlekar
Kan tyckas vara en trivial rubrik
Men är ett ingenmansland
Det är som att hamna på mittrefugen
Mellan rätt och rätt
Det kan ta en dag i anspråk

Det kan hindra ett spännande möte
Försena eller till och med stoppa
Få ett liv att byta riktning

Lolita Ray Sweden

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST JAMES

After Francisco Zurbaran (1598 - 1664)

Under the cowered eye of a hound,
Herod Agrippa
ensures his decree
is executed to its bloodied end.

Brutality in green ochre and alizarin crimson
as the blade dazzles
the apostle's face of heavenly righteousness.

Onlookers gaze in anticipation of the kill.
He kneels in sainted belief
as if this is how it has been imagined.

A holy death comes. His eyes say it,
lips shaped in prayer.
This is a screenshot
of our religious past, our unholy present.

John Saunders Ireland

WE DRIVE WEST

The forecourt is a rainbow of petrol
on which floats small boats of litter.
The wind, unforgiving as wronged love,
chills our already unfeeling bones.

We have stopped to refuel our bodies
with whatever the small shop offers,
are told the next stop is two hundred
or more and may not be open.

Rattled by uncertainty we stock up
with chocolate, coke, cigarettes, check
our tyres and oil. The attendant speaks
with his face, his half-closed eyes

leer at her bare legs twirling from her dress.
She sees his dirty look, gives him the finger
as I full throttle onto the road,
leave him to fantasise in the fumes.

We drive all night, pullover once
to re-acquaint ourselves.
The night is blue-black, the stars blind us.
We are in love again, again and again.

John Saunders Ireland

TWENTY ONE ADDRESSES

Threatening form of bold type and delineated boxes,
collage of bureaucratic paternal oversight
where misdemeanours may be revealed
and the eye of the law winks lazily at you
as if to say *we'll get you, it's only a matter of time.*
Twenty one addresses in fifty years gives
a nomadic adventure to the vetting application,
hauls me over the spiked rails of each location
where hurt knocked on every open door
and guilt spelt out my post code.

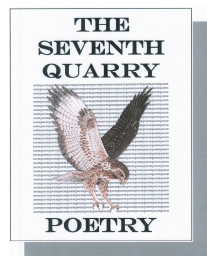
I feel the cold breath of paranoia on my hand
as I confess milestones of my journey from birthplace
to now, that seek to uncover the unchecked wrongs
the given commissions and omissions of crime,
the short change of deprivation, the hustled clamouring.
Will Lucy Browne squeal on me or the Walker twins
break their self-imposed amnesty of silence?
And will love which fragranced these places
stand up in my defence of culpable negligence
of those who deserved better and received less.

John Saunders Ireland

EVIDENCE

I am holding the tattered manila missive.
The front cover boasts the name of the hospital
and the responsible County Council.
Inside, delineated sheets treasury tagged
in bureaucratic order are dog eared
and stained by the thumbs and fingers of history,
attendants, nurses, doctors who over the years
contributed a word, a sentence on their observations.
It smells of sweat, tobacco and unction.
I turn to the admission page dated nineteen forty five,
scan for familiar names as evidence of what transpired,
I find a vague statement about difficulties at home
and the single word affirmation to the question;
is the patient likely to be aggressive?

John Saunders Ireland



'THE NO.12 BUS'

they look like a bus load of lost souls
on their way to the other side

of townhill on the no.12 bus
up mount pleasant hill

they are sunken
and grey
and sagging with
the weight of
life

the glassy look of a woman
fixes on mine as we pass

her trailing eyes that follow me
like a creepy old painting
the only sign of life

Daniel M. Parry Wales

YOUR DIARIES ENTERED

Thieves slashed open the soft bindings of your life,
found nothing there they thought of worth -
stopped at the padlocked year you found a wife,
the long moment of my birth.

After you died I trawled those ruptured years,
pages of work and weather writ small.
You were done. But I was hunting lusts and fears
that shaped your days when love was all.

Should I prise your young life apart,
have a locksmith let me see
into the room where you caused my start?
What have you done with the key?

Jenny Hockey England

REVENANT

I often visit that house. Nobody owns it
and when I leave I cannot say how
I travelled, nor the colour of the sky
or how many steps I had to climb
and whether the unkempt head was
watching from the bay. None of its bulbs
are over forty watt. All of them hang
mid ceiling, unable, defeated
by the languor of tenants and their exes,
by children long grown awry.

The house I often visit has turned
a balustraded face to the street, would
hint at staff, nobility. Each room follows
another down the crack-tiled hall
to a store that knew coal, a newspaper
privy. I find my way through, discover
a door I somehow always miss. That holds
itself back, is often elsewhere, showing
late to press its tarnished egg handle
deep into my fist, helping me walk
into an annex that admits no light
though its window looks out on startled
trees, another moon on the hoof.

Whether someone is waiting inside
I cannot tell. But a shot divan and a
sweet-smelling chair hold warmth
from a night of troubled sleep. I cannot
refuse them now, defeated, unable.

Jenny Hockey England

ORCHESTRA STOPPED FOREVER

The strings were torn off
to be used as snares.
The wood axed for fires.

Brass made into ornaments
and the drums became
units of storage.

The harps wheeled away
and preserved in museums.
Guitars and keyboards sold on e-bay.

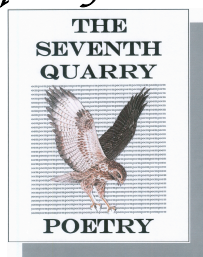
The voices of the choir
and beat of the Samba band
lost in the empty Arts Centre.

Even staves were turned
upright and into columns
of an accountant's ledger.

Mid rehearsal the orchestra
were stopped forever ;
children holding onto air.

Mike Jenkins Wales

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry



POETRY ACTIVISTS: THE RAW AND THE COOKED

by America's John Hart

When the word “poetry” and the place name “San Francisco” appear in one sentence, the subject is usually the Beat Generation and the self-proclaimed San Francisco Renaissance of the 1950s. Alongside New York, this region was a center of the anti-Modernist reaction that took hold during that decade and came to dominate the American poetic scene. Before that cultural shift, however, several schools could claim to represent California on the national stage. One of these, the grouping known as the Activists, is still, or again, in business.

The Activists had their beginnings in the 1930s in classes taught in modest settings by my father, Lawrence Hart. This was the heyday of Modernism, and Hart devoured each new book by the likes of Eliot, Auden, Archibald MacLeish, Dylan Thomas, and Edith Sitwell, along with older but newly available poetry by Dickinson and Hopkins. (“The poets exploding like bombs,” as Auden put it.) It was a revelation: so much more being done with the language, so much more vividness and innovation and surprise, than in most of the poetry Hart had grown up with. He was determined to understand what was happening; to analyze it; and above all to draw from it methods of poetry-making that could be taught and learned.

By trial and error he worked out a series of standard assignments designed to get the beginning poet past the initial barriers of conventionality and ingrained cliché. First was what he called Direct Sensory Reporting, a form of descriptive writing without metaphors and almost without adjectives and adverbs, in which sharp impressions were created by giving precise details alone. “Don’t think,” he would say. “Look.” The student would then move on to working with original metaphor and simile, or “double imagery” as Hart preferred to call it. The third step was usually a series of exercises using more abstract language, but giving it freshness through unusual combinations and word-choices. By this time poems built of these materials would begin to appear, and the problems of building coherent sequences out of individually striking lines would present themselves. Sooner or later—it was a moment Hart looked forward to—the student would weary of assignment work, strike off in some unexpected direction, and begin to speak in an unmistakable

personal lingo.

By 1940, the circle of such postdoctoral students, as it were, had half a dozen members, notably Jeanne McGahey, Rosalie Moore, and Robert Horan. They began marketing nationally. In that era of groups, some kind of joint label was needed. The choice somehow fell on “Activists,” a name not meant to have a political connotation. Under this flag the group made a considerable splash. There was a segment in New Directions’ *Five Young American Poets 1941* (Jeanne McGahey); a pair of books in the Yale Series of Younger Poets (Robert Horan 1948 and Rosalie Moore 1949); and in 1951 an entire issue of *Poetry* magazine (then as now the journal-of-record for the United States) devoted to the circle. A second, half-issue *Poetry* feature followed in 1958.

It was also in 1958 that Hart and some of his colleagues took to the columns of the *San Francisco Chronicle* to criticize the emerging San Francisco Renaissance, in the products of which they saw no real innovation but rather a retreat from savvy and inventiveness. Letters flew. The file is fascinating reading—reminder of a time when a good fight about poetry could reach the American Sunday papers.

No doubt who “won.” Despite some prestigious individual publications later on, especially by Moore and McGahey, the Activist group as such disappeared from the literary radar screen thereafter.

What continued undeterred, however, was Hart’s freelance teaching and research, in schools and colleges around the San Francisco Bay Area as well as in private seminars. Even as the audience for Modernist-oriented work dwindled, he kept on refining his theory and method, demanding still more originality, still more precision, still more force; and a certain number of people always found their way into his underpublicized classes and worked there, sometimes for many years. Since my father’s death in 1996, I have continued his project on a research scale, offering these methods to interested poets in what we now call the Lawrence Hart Seminars.

Two years ago, in connection with a string of new books from Sugartown Publishing, six of us resolved to revive the old label and present ourselves, once

more, as a group, as “Activists.” If never quite the perfect descriptor, it does have history behind it, and does say something about the approach these disparate writers share.

The new Activists, like the old, accept the idea that poetry should be clearly different from prose, not just in occasional “peak” lines, but throughout: that every line should offer language heightened, in one way or another, from the background buzz of ordinary, lazy speech. Such “active” language can be hard to manage—one of the reasons many writers opt for dilution. We spend much time wrestling with the difficulties that this ambition brings.

When Allen Ginsberg died, *New Yorker* editor David Remnick spoke of “the great (and long over) debate between the raw and the cooked in American poetry.” Ginsberg, to Remnick, was the triumphant prophet of the Raw: of a poetry based on casualness, spontaneity, unfiltered American speech. “First thought, best thought,” Ginsberg famously preached, and seemed to speak for many.

Even today, the best-selling model in the Colonies is the poem-that-almost-reads-like-prose, in which (it is hoped or claimed) great emotional force is nonetheless, somehow, generated. A favorable review will include terms like “honest,” “deceptively simple,” “unstrained.” If work is being done with the language, it is not supposed to show.

Distinct as they are, the styles *The Seventh Quarry* presents in this feature reflect the determination *not to settle* for the first, or second, thought. To twist, to substitute, to find the unexpected but resonant word. To take a risk—when risk must be taken—on the side of obscurity, never on the side of blandness.

To *cook* the language, and with no apology.

Fred Ostrander is the elder among these writers; his association with the group goes back to the early 1950s. Ostrander has something of Blake or Whitman in his long lines, long forms, and extreme imaginative reach. Alongside wide periodical publication, his books include *The Hunchback and the Swan* (Woolmer-Brotherson, 1976), *Petroglyphs* (Blue Light Press, 2009), and *It Lasts a Moment: New and Collected Poems* (Sugartown Publishing, 2013).

THE DELUGE

In the museums I return to that massive, dark, over-framed painting of the biblical
flood

that howls across the rooms, a wind, a demolition—

it is a fury, like a prophet, a loud half-idiot jeremiad, a damnation of souls—

like that at the streetcorner, finger pointed as in the poster—

it is the verb left out of the language.

Souls—that cling with small hands, with fingers, to badly painted rocks,

beneath the terrible God speaking with repeated brilliance out of the sky—

or they float, mere swimmers, with ineffective strokes in the chaos of lifting or
utterly disintegrating waves—

or floating among the chains—

souls staring with round eyes out of the comical deluge, calling to rescuers

(and will

until the paint crumbles upon the canvas)—

to rescuers who themselves, small swimmers, have been pulled into the vast,
insatiate, twisting spiral of the sea.

Together with masts, spars, all, the handpainted half-clothed smiling figurehead,

the little rodents,

and the great vanquished statue of Bel,

the emaciated carriers of the stones,
the particular colors of fallen gardens,
the terrified horses of Babylon (detail of an eye reflecting light),
and the armies unable to swim, helplessly lifted upon the flood . . .
On the right, and distant upon the waves, and growing smaller,
Noah floats with his animals.
This dark, overpopulated deluge.
Punishment. Beneath the lightning and the electricities, one erratic bird.
It is a painting without a miracle.
There is little sky.

PETROGLYPHS

I remember — or there recurs like dream across my eyes —
a cratered and a volcanic country
and the shoes pressing upon the dazzling dust
and the shadow stunting. . .

The lightning upon the desert
the electrons illuminating the huddling primates
the animal trails we followed, through the rabbit brush to the light of the water
the gleam and blue of the dragonfly

and the little, yellow, mortal birds
in speech upon the stems.

The carvings I discovered
scuffed by birds, struck by the desert meteor,
effaced by rain and lizards,
by day the violet and deadly ray. . .

A calendar that has gone into the spiral.
I recognize lightnings,
antlers, the hand.

It is beyond the place
of such extinction, shadow upon granite,
that the symbols cross my consciousness like clouds.

I cannot placate the hawk
among the little dark luminous eyes
of the weak and high-pitched animals
the snake upon the sand spiraling and unspiraling. . .

The tears glitter
into the dust and the creases
of the face, and the lips crack,

and the sun is a blue, blind, burning stone.
And the delirium spreads like a dazzle,
and giftless the eyelid lifts, and the emerald selects
and all that was plausible
has been replaced by what is real.

Judith Yamamoto encountered Lawrence Hart in an evening school class and described herself as at first “derisive, then terrified, then entranced, and finally euphoric.” More than any other Activist, she addresses political concerns in her poetry; more than any other, perhaps, she is able to wrap the boldness of her lines in a limpid, conversational tone. Her long-delayed first book, *At My Table*, appeared in 2014 with Sugartown Publishing.

FLAGS AT HALF MAST

You may say that the ocean is in the shape of a mountain,
where the sky comes to an end. Flatness and illusion. A woman
turns her back on it, time the part that is all around.
The big boat comes into the harbor, flags at half mast.
Glitter behind it
and a long way out.
Two small boats fly no flag. I remember that I love you.
Glitter and loss,
looking into the water and eating a sandwich. You tell me
you are going to die,
while the big boat backs away from the dock.

Comes in a second time. Time the part that is all around,
and no, I will not believe it. Ties up to the pier.
Certainty in the small things only, the feverfew
on the mountain, the barbs of light on water.
How that light has no end.

IT MAY BE THAT ALL THAT BEAUTY BLINDS US

Up against the wall, knee deep in abalone light, we listen
as the shells break around us. Even among the simple sheets
we are hunted for our tongues and delicate spines.
The ferryman stuffs one hand into his stiff pocket, curses the rock
and the whirlpool. As though there were some other way.

Between chromosomes and the soul in flight, we inch
forward. Snared like an imprint on a fossil, thin claw outstretched,
or the flowered silk of mother's kimono
remembered from long ago. It may be that all that beauty blinds us.
We don't believe the sudden glisten of a siren's tangled hair,
the searchlights in ancient streets, the screams of men
tortured by other men. Steer clear, we say.

These crimes are not ours;

these shackles dragging at our ankles
render no verdict.

MAYBE A BASKET MAKER

Here in the lowest branches
the shadows beat with a crowd of bird calls –
keeping their dark, as I keep mine,
in warm bundles,
in mossy rooms.

Only in the sudden stillness I know
something is there.
Maybe a deer, maybe
a basket maker.

I've found the eight-pointed crystal in the mirror leaves,
the arrowheads in the high pasture,
and heard my grandmother, laughing
with the midwives.

Three times I rise, there is no forgetting.
I carry my blankets, like the fears of old women,
into a puzzle of closets.

If I pretend there are divisions between laughing and crying,

it is only a solace,
pushing my knotted head into a canebrake of sparrows.
Don't show me the salmon you've netted,
the brown hares you've skinned;
the skulls, hollow as ears,
of the babies you've buried.
I have my own; I would rather
sit by the water,
picking the longest rushes, peeling
the straightest willow branches.

Jon Miller first encountered the Hart methods in classes for gifted youngsters at a suburban high school. Now an international aid worker with postings around the world, he has written with dedication and polish, published little. The first poem here refers to a U.S. military aerial acrobatics squadron, the Blue Angels, which visits San Francisco once a year, to the delight of many and the distress of some.

ANGELS ABOVE THE CITY

"An earsplitting Fleet Week air show that is sure to wow spectators and rattle some nerves."

We arrayed ourselves, insensible as dolls,
A vertigo of yearning to appease, applaud, surrender
To the blue, condoning angels.
And the clouds fell away at their approach,
A geometry so furious that the loose sky bent in its procession.

Nor could we break formation, nor carry on in thoughtful self-preservation,
And the children drew secret breath,
As fish through fitted gill,
And the prayer at our throats caught
Like a dark, discerning vine.
And the old guard keen in memory of victory and maimings past,
And the good citizen, erect, his feet inserted to the proper hour of his shoes.

They assayed us all from that unearthly height,
Like a rake among ashes,
Friends or friendless target in their implacable sight,
And declared the astonishing ease
By which our muscles may cease their successful collaboration.

For death is indifferent,
A caprice to which we tailor the customs of survival:

The axe, the shield, our guilt.
O let the angels forego their merciful promise of return
To reprove, reprieve, or
If received, that colder and higher commandment,
Bring this city to a waterless end.

CLIMBING STAIRS: HANOI 2008

Stand with me, child, on these aging stairs,
Dark as a false suggestion,
That rise to other and deeper shadows;
As night regards us from every window
Where the vines lie
Clustered like a vast indecision.

Little is known of our engagement at the top:
Perhaps the formal, deafening reception,
Or deliverance from all acuity;
Or the mild stars only,
Garbled as coral no more,
But fashioned, instead, in that
Legendary, inclusive, and resolvable knot.

Child, you need not follow;
For the commonest regret is spoken
First in a language of decision,
Where the fool's eye stutters
Then, in its awful bracken, cowers for sleep.
Randomly she seems to hear me,

Eyes shining like a green exception in winter,
And takes my hand
In the small, her simple palm,
Supple as the phases of the moon.

So, turning, I climb
And climbing, reclaim once more
From that proud disaster of death
An allegiance to the ambivalence of my living.
Half-lit in this hour,
Like an unholy flower,
Like a shrunken, fetal moon;
Child, lead now, I will follow.

Patricia Nelson also attended one of Hart's classes for gifted high school children, joining his seminar group almost 30 years later. One of the themes in her highly imagistic work is the limited reach of language: here is a wordsmith who does not worship the Word. Magazine credits include *Avocet*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Illuminations*; her first book, *Among the Shapes that Fold and Fly*, appeared in 2012 with Sugartown Publishing.

PICTOGRAPH

For Fred Ostrander, the poet of "archetypal time."

On the leaning desert rock
marked in jointed paints

a vanished hunter
without envy, wish or eye.

We are clumsy at his stone, misshapen.
We cannot vanish into archetypal time,
the distillation that both calls and saddens.

We are Here: The accident irrevocable.
In moving sunlight our shapes expand and narrow
among the large and beating animals of Now.

O the small hole of the eye
the small hole into spirit
the grief of all the shapes between.

HOUSE: A CHILD'S DRAWING

Figures in their first colors:
People like piles of circles.

See the lines like hands askew,
small house, taller figures
vacant at the torso and the grin.

They seem to have eaten a thought
both large and invisible.

See the bird-wide smile:
Brief, emphatic,
touching corners with its emblem
like the unkempt limb of a broom.

Look down. See how hard it is to see,
the temporary, the directions
that sway like garments
between your eye and the ground.

Recall the shoulder-high lights,
suns that vanished
ambushed by explanation.

Put a finger on a word,
a smile of straws, invented.
That is where you will go.

ANGELS

As if on horseback, angels

lean into the shapes of the world:
cliff, wave, spiral of bird.
Winged forms brighten like a lens.

Light is tall in all the galloping hearts,
tall among stars and echoing leaves
tall even in the Word
the little helix of their written names.

From height or edge
the faces occupy, flowering—
each burning in its canyon,
prophetic, still, bronzed with meaning.

Each eye wide,
collector of all forms to come.

Bonnie Thomas began work in the Lawrence Hart Seminar in 1999. A sustainable design professional who also paints and photographs, she quickly mastered the fiendishly difficult Direct Sensory Reporting exercise; many of her poems hinge on sharp visual observation. Her first volume, *Sun on the Rind*, is just out from Sugartown Publishing.

PIANISSIMO

It is as though the day has been stolen or was borrowed.

Shadows separate the room, and in three corners,
a great darkness.

They share the lamp together;
his book, the surface most lighted.

He shifts the wrist and the weight, paper against cloth
and each sound, or absence of sound, has the night within it:

the hush and the hum
the electrical device
the silent vibration inside the ear
and the music—

Pianissimo

and the undecipherable black marks on the page.

Between them, there is the certainty of dawn,
grizzled and prescribed without apology or pause.

His eyes come to her eyes, and the high planes
in their faces soften

and both faces become recognizable

and each returns to the self.

It is then that she feels the slippage.

She holds her head still,

eyes both focused and far

and the piano tolls the unknown and the familiar

as though, once, she had been close inside this same passage.

THE REPEATING MURMUR OF THE ANCIENT RIVERS

O delicate madness! Recalling the classics,

searching for the lost model

as if Cleopatra, the vision, comes present,

narrates to us our longing.

There is no return, and the women wait and count,

fingers hard-pressed at each coin,

the fashioned and familiar profile, diminished,

the treasured cameo, spent.

At port of entry and port of call, statues fail

tangentially to the long and skewed horizon,
sink into the broken sea.

A legion of talents down to four directions.

What is left, at the crossing?

The ancient promise still rings the beloved sky,
this wide heaven known as our own, and yet we see
the great, northern walls collapse the fragile cold,
the southern levees, yielding.

The doves in the eaves call and call the grand malaise
and echoes mourn the temple.

There is no return; the chapter, closed and closing.

Beautiful, ruinous reign!

And we, in our expertise and our bankruptcy,
dismissed from this noble hall.

THE FALLIBLE THEOREM OF TERRESTRIAL DRAW

We are prayed for, perhaps envisioned.

The appeal lifts through the sky.

The sun moves center to right degree;
we are delineated by earth's undone course.

The relief is cast:
the indulgent above the declined and the dead.

And in the timed and measured tumult,
the igniting fingertip
and the vertical hum through the spine.
The overwhelming strangeness of air and the need.
The two lungs announce
the voracious intake the mind can't override.

And the breath we use, then must give back?
We forget, and we descend
beyond gathered stones or smooth marker,
the agreement that eludes, the attempts to cheat.
We are the short burn
in this solar, magnetic, unnarrated law.

John Hart is the son of Lawrence Hart and Activist poet Jeanne McGahey. His first book, *The Climbers*, appeared in 1978 in the prestigious Pitt Poetry Series; his second, *Storm Camp*, will join the emerging Activist series by Sugartown Publishing. He co-edits the durable Berkeley poetry journal *Blue Unicorn*. A rock climber and alpinist, he finds the imagery of that pursuit welling up in his poems. Washington Column is a Yosemite Valley feature.

THE FALLER

. . . *when a happy thing falls.*—Rilke

“When I fell on Washington Column,” said my friend,
“I could see myself, could see my own shape, falling,
red man, black outline, into the waste of air.

“Was not afraid.

“Was vigilant, rather; wary; shrewd:
like someone who passes with money a road made famous by thieves:
ready to act, if action were required,
or if no other action ever came
but that of death, to lay the body down
in that same calm.

“And, striking a ledge, I lived.”

Incessantly we have these wild reports
brought back to us by those experienced:
whom late we rescued, not by their consent,
by blood, or rope, or hideous incision,
outrage of surgery, or the bitter sleep

where the blind drugs fight and the offended flesh
trembles and lives:

But for what need the fantasy evolved—
during the moment of loss, when the black arc closes,
during the moment itself, that all is well
(and even a short time after)—
—we do not know.

Ask Darwin, raiding the islands for birds.
Ask any magician, changing the atom by stealth
that makes red hair or a leer:
and he will say: “This comfort could be spared.
For by it there is no one who has lived
another hour to breed.
It must be some damnable
gift or illusion,
reversal of grief
for the changing occasion:
whatever it is, it is
a thing unreal.”

Grieving he turns his back but still we see.

Though to the nurses bent over the bed

grief comes professional, brow pursed, well paid:

though to the ancient relatives it comes

with a handful of wrenched flowers:

though the mourners start up in the pond like a circle of frogs:

The dancer himself is silent.

His hope once gone, the discipline begins.

The light falls softly to the center of the room.

The soul picks up its insubstantial shirt,

goes into evening like a mad recruit,

envying all that have gone down before.

And the ringed, unspeakable dauphin—

the climber, falling, forgotten

already by his friends who shy away—

whatever drug he was impaled upon before,

is sobered by death imminent, death sure.

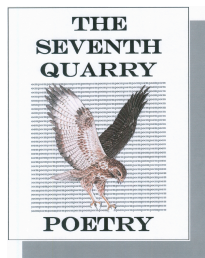
Goes into the dark like a powerful swimmer,

the great arms forwards, breasting without labor

a long and gleaming, dolphin-crowded sea.

They say that when the impact comes
the destruction of the body is not felt but heard
and heard for a long time.

And death does not disturb the dying soul
any more than the snowfall, vanishing into the lake,
can move nor discontent the pale water.





Lawrence Hart © 2015 John Hart

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

GRAY CLOUDS

This morning, I remembered the gun-metal gray clouds that hovered over the Catskills when I drove 17 west.

I could drown in their absence. Since you died

I am wrapped in gray wool, the world just a little muffled, my eyes clouded over, myself not quite here. I try to wear bright colors—the deep red of a silk blouse, the Asian pattern of red and deep blue in the soft folds of my favorite jacket, the red I am sure will ward off the evil eye.

So many of the people I love are gone, the ones I believed protected me from the malevolence that swirls around us.

I am certain if I wear these clothes this grief, too, will end, and I will go on to find new color in the world, the flare of tulips opening their lovely mouths, the yellow flags of forsythia waving and I in my red jacket that keeps sprouting holes I've worn it so much, my jacket will work its magic,

my students will write brilliant poems, the muffler

of gray wool will fall away, and I will gather joy in my arms and all the colors I love – deep red, blue, gold – will swirl around me like a long velvet cape

that moves when I move, sings when I sing.

Maria Mazziotti Gillan America

FORGETTING TO GIVE THANKS

I watch the public TV program on Rwanda

and the water they are lifting out of polluted

wells to drink, though there's a cholera epidemic.

It is the only water they have and they draw
a pail of it out of the well. The water is brown
and thick and muddy. The emaciated man
walks away with the pail of water.

Several children walk behind him.

They stop at the side of the road
and the man lets each of them drink
from a battered metal dipper.

In my house I forget to give thanks
for the clean water that pours
out of the kitchen faucet, the water
in the bathrooms, hot and plentiful,
for long showers and baths. I forget
to be grateful.

I think of our trip to Sicily in 1990,
where our hosts told us there was a drought
and asked us to shower only two times a week.
Back in our own house, we forget how much
of the world does not have what we have
and even I forget, I who grew up in an apartment

heated by a coal stove. The only warm place
was at the kitchen table set up close to the stove.
The bedrooms were frigid. My mother would warm
the beds with bricks she heated in the oven
and then we'd rush in and jump into bed.
The house had no insulation and no storm windows
so the windows would develop a coating of ice
in patterns I thought were beautiful.
We bathed in water that my mother heated
on the stove. My mother washed our clothes
on a tin washboard.

Today, with my house full of appliances—stove,
refrigerator, dishwasher, washing machine,
dryer, air conditioners, TV's and as much
hot or cold water as I want, I forget to be grateful,
and am only reminded for a minute when I see
those people in Rwanda who are drinking water
so filthy it will probably kill them. Or when I think
of my mother and all the work she did, carting
buckets of coal, stoking the fire, boiling water
to keep us warm.

Maria Mazziotti Gillan America

ANYWAY

Saw that bird today you know her
What's her face?
Used to live on the East Side
What's her name again?
Anyway
She's not with
What's his name from over the bridge?
Lived by that pub
You know the one
Had a comedy band.
Anyway
They split up
He was having it away
With that woman drove a taxi
The one with glasses
Long blonde hair
Big teeth and eyebrows
Can't remember where she's from.
Anyway
Now she's with the bald guy

From the garage on the roundabout
The one that sells flowers
But closes on a Sunday
It's by that DIY shop
Bought my garden furniture there.
Anyway
You catch my drift yeah
You know who I mean
She works in the hairdressers now
The one up the hill
By the school for naughty boys
Anyway

They split up.

Sue A'Hearn Wales

REBUILD

Blood, bones,
fragments of painful tissues,
flashes of nightmares,
oozing memories –
I sipped their slurps
in each mouthful
of my coffee.
I make a new coffee everyday –
A new recipe each time,
And rebuild my self
with its viscosity.

Namitha Varma-Rajesh India

FUNERALS

I have attended
all my funerals –

buried my selves
with no pomp or show
except fitting tears
and beautiful elegies.
After each heartbreak
there would be a me –

an us, a memory –
to bury
and move on.

After each funeral
I have risen,
Restored,
Only to walk up to my
next funeral.

Every burial
has been more sombre
than the previous,
Every new elegy
more beautiful.

There's one last funeral
I need to attend

before walking up to you –

The burial of

my last sane self.

Namitha Varma-Rajesh India

BORDERLINE

Strangeness has rooted deep into your heart

As if the seed had turned into a weed.

The eeriness and deed of your dear art,

The mead, the speed will impede to be freed.

No. The object of my project is clear.

I recollect The froth of the ocean,

Collect my memories and their motion.

They appear in and out of my own sphere.

You neglect, reject, disrespect your brain,

Like a vain lane. Tis your pain and your stain.

Your vision's blurry, your thoughts are bleary.

Your world is muzzy, your mind is fuzzy.

Stop. I'm now on the cliff and out of frame.
The waves as cyclothymia are in flames.
On the grass, I gawk at the endless clash,
The moving line between earth and sea. Splash.
The both of them are one, lost in the maze.
There is no border, only disorder.
You can be fazed in front of the green haze.

Justine Milhé France

Editor's note: Justine is a young poet who was featured in *The Colour of Saying* (The Seventh Quarry Press and Cross-Cultural Communications, 2014)

PLOWED BY THE LOVE OF YOU

My heart has been plowed
by the love of you.
Feelings dug out
of hidden places
now surge like fragrant flowers.

Yes, feelings, once dormant
magically ascend their graves
whisking me out of my death.

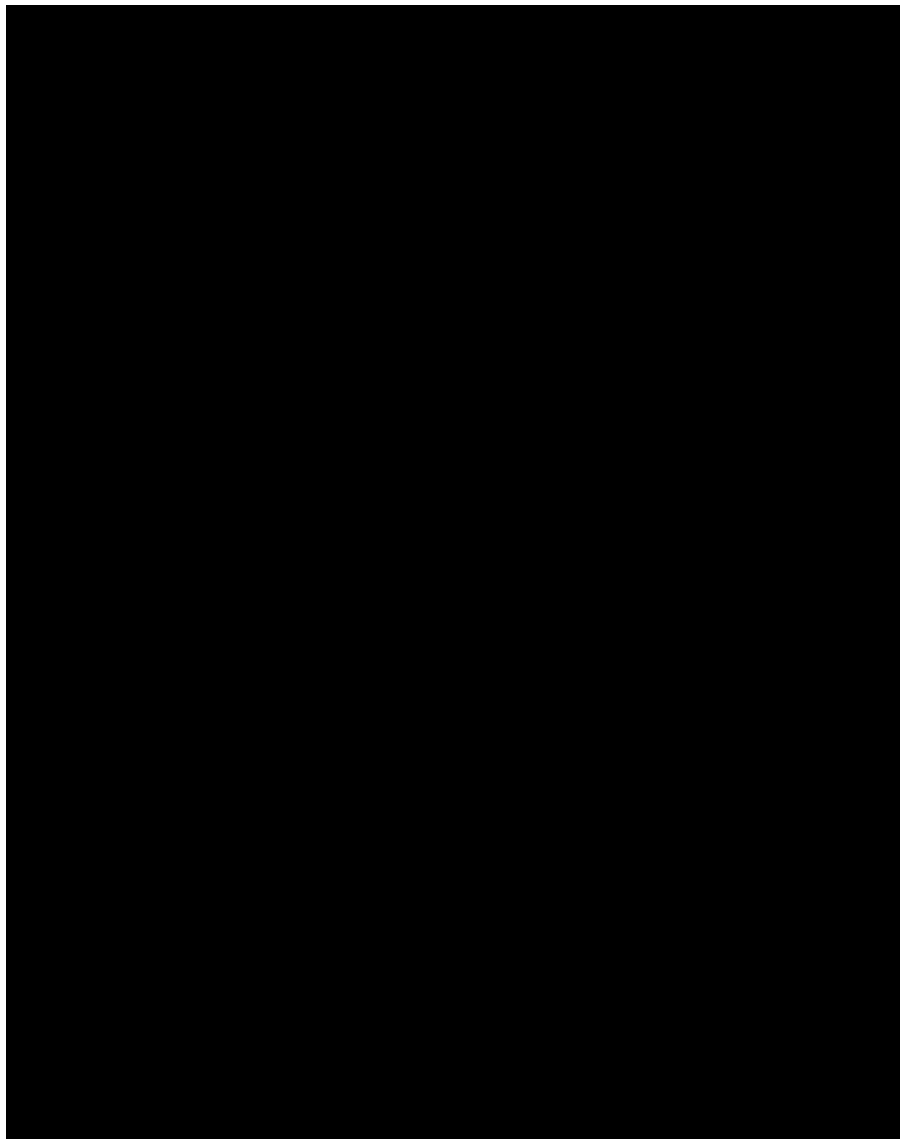
As if awakened by a new world,
I find myself adorned
with a crown of tiny daisies.

What is this power of love
that flowers my soul to bloom,
that renders me open to its truth.

What is this power made of,
but the very origins of life
expressed in subtle, yet
passionate gestures.

This mystery plowed of my heart
is seeded by you, my darling,
my catalyst of eternal love.

Carolyn Mary Kleefeld America



The Immortal Lovers (Oil on Canvas, 30" x 24") © 2015

Carolyn Mary Kleefeld

A HIDDEN WILDERNESS

Beneath the iridescent seas,
lies a hidden wilderness.

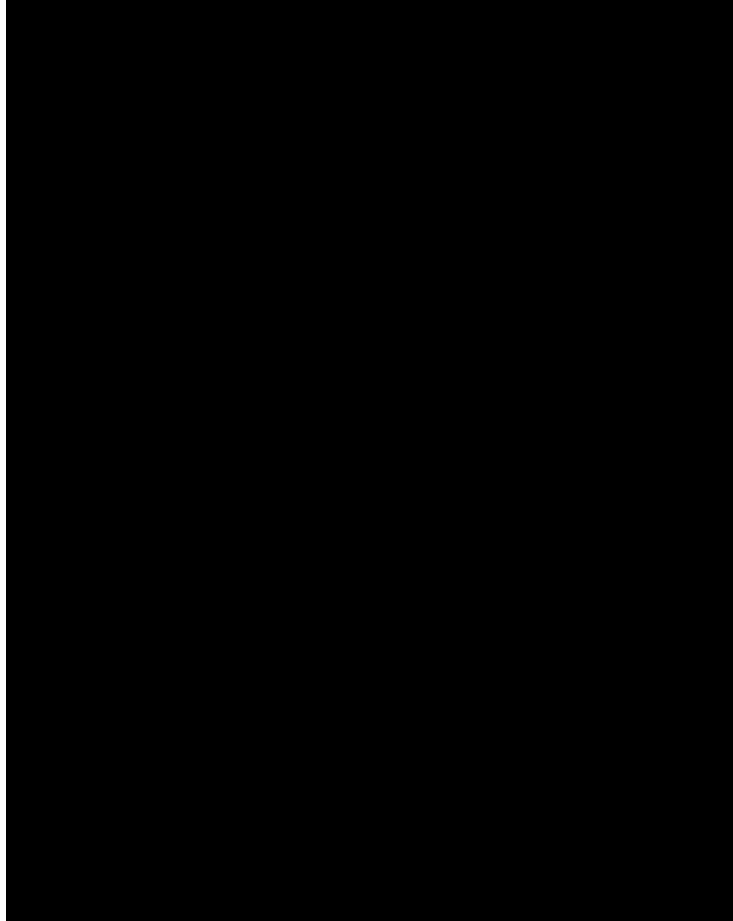
At the horizon, pollution gathers,
spelling out the color of doom.

Yet the full moon soars
above the tallest pine tree, victorious,
and twilight arrives on silver toes,
brimming with secrets.

A setting sun paints the canvas of skies
before they transform into darkness.

And onwards wanders my psyche
into the timeless realms.

Carolyn Mary Kleefeld America



Path to the Source (Oil on Canvas, 30" x 24") © 2015 Carolyn Mary Kleefeld

CASA BARKAN

for Stanley and Bebe

Casa Barkan

with its Hollywood 1920's

stucco style, its Spanish

terra cotta tiled roof,

its heavy wooden door

with its invisible welcome sign
where Kunitz, Rabassa, Scammacca, Ko Won,
and a parade of 40 years of poets—some Pulitzer Prize
winners, some just with their first manuscript
have met with Stanley to discuss their CCC books and translations
where more than 400 CCC books line the bookshelves
and, after more than 45 years of publishing, also bulge from
storage units in the backyard—
where Bebe's soft stuffed sculptures of legendary
movie stars Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe line the walls
along with her Matisse patterned portraits of family—
where poets and translators have always felt cherished
as they spoke and worked in English, Romanian, Russian, Hebrew,
Korean, Italian, Yiddish, Spanish—
mosaic platters of bagels and cream cheese nearby on an oak table
with mugs of green tea and honey or bottles and glasses of Italian wine—

But upstairs in his study alone at 3 AM,
Stanley clutches a red pencil above a poet's manuscript.

Laura Boss America

PRAYER AFTER EARLY SNOW

God, give us a tranquil winter—
Darkness enlightened with intimate fire
where loneliness can be divided like bread.

Fill our basements with wheat of life.
Flow sweet wine in our veins during nights of ice and snow.
Give us hope, indifference to cries of fate and prehistory.

Enter our dawns with misty streams of days—landscapes
where every tree is a will, and abandon us each evening
with dream of endurance.

Let each man survive in the safe nest of his ignorance,
blind to gore of faraway continents
deaf to groans of millions' hunger.

Do not condemn us for global truth.
God, give us a tranquil winter.
Step down . . . sit by our fire.
Warm up your chilled hands like a man.

Adam Szyper America

From *And Suddenly Spring* by Adam Szyper
(Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications, 1992)

FATHER OF MINE BEHIND GREAT WATERS OF TIME

Father of mine behind great waters of time
From which nobody has returned,
Step out from the dusty photograph
Hand me a moment which doesn't hurt
Light which doesn't blind
Truth which doesn't kill.

In the tunnel of night in which
Orchids of memory wink occasionally
Show me the flame of parental home
In this house, rootless and homeless.

And give me your strength, which
Radiates a halo of love
So I can ascend the rest of my life with dignity,
Proud among stars and columns of clean air.

Adam Szyper America

From *And Suddenly Spring* by Adam Szyper
(Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications, 1992)

Interview with Bulgarian poet Bissera Videnova



Bissera Videnova© 2015 Bissera Videnova

Peter Thabit Jones: *When did you first start writing?*

Bissera Videnova: I consciously began writing poetry when I was seventeen years-old. At the age of twelve, I would mess around with words but it all started when I was four to five, coming up with songs based on my own text and music.

PTJ: *What were your first influences?*

BV: I never enjoyed the “required reading” authors at school despite how genius

they were. I didn't like writing about them or reading their books thoroughly. When I began getting ready for the Theatre Academy auditions, in the span of four to five years, I read through most poetry available in Bulgarian and then I realised that I wanted to write just like the most expressive and yet quite minimalistic Bulgarian poet and dramaturg, Katia Yosifova. During this time, I fell in love with Louise Labe's and Rabindranath Tagore's texts. These are all my early influences, I think. Of course I know that everyone is characteristic for themselves and the influence is a reflection and not something that comes directly from the source. I liked many authors and became attached to them, but simply as a reader. Just to name a few: Marina Cvetanova, Fyodor Tyutchev, Arthur Rimbaud, Dylan Thomas and, of course, Shakespeare.

PTJ: *What is the poetry scene like in Bulgaria?*

BV: I will use a comparison: the Bulgarian poetry scene at the moment is like a permanent exhibition at a major museum. It includes everything, from traditional Bulgarian authors to contemporary experimentalists and one or two underground groups with new ideas disguised in old clothes. The themes are limited and influenced by what's trending, which we have barely started to explore. Well-established authors are more commonly accepted. However, they cover multiple topics, but rarely focus on one problem in depth. There are exceptions, a few young authors, teenagers, who gained popularity via social networks. Most authors release their first book when they are thirty or older. It is okay to be self-published, but then your book has no value among the professional circles. People without academic degrees in literature and linguistics are hardly accepted. The Post-Socialism established new limitations which were built upon the previous Socialist ones and even the ones from the urban culture after the Bulgarian Independence at the end of the 19th Century. Personally, what I miss in our poetry scene is bravery and a clear voice which can destroy these limitations, but that will not happen until there is a good amount of critics whose followers will rely on the words and experience of these critics.

PTJ: *How important do you think poetry is in a world dominated by increasing technological developments?*

BV: I like to say that poetry heals the emotional body of the reader and even more so the one of the writer. As long as we have feelings, there will be poetry despite the technological developments which exhaust the mind and cause stress. Poetry, music and photography are under the influence of the planet Neptune and therefore they are refined arts, timeless, sensitive and bearing the most difficult task - to excite. They are like a lively breeze that is inside the digital device next to you, looking and whispering from the screen in. Thanks to these new technological creations they find their way into our bodies and minds. A mind that can briefly breathe a little.

PTJ: *What are you working on at the moment?*

BV: I am currently working on a play that deals with technologies being the continuation of the humankind and also a travel journal about the United States where I travelled throughout extensively in the past two years.

THE WALL

The wall—not letting anybody in,
the fear—wrapped up in a shell,
golden nut as a Christmas toy—
shining hard, not needed.
The suffering—pale
the losses—barefoot.
Spoiled by searching,
fed up with happening,
his loneliness coaxes,
rusty fetters are dangling.
As a “froggy” the pebble is jumping
on the reflected surface.
The dreams—hidden
in the magician’s top hat
without the right to breathe
unless the claque invite him.

The wall is cracking.
The hat disappears.
In the crevice a lit-up pendant
is glistening.

Bissera Videnova Bulgaria

Translated into English by Vantzeti Vassilev and Vasil Slavov

INHERITANCE

Bequeath to me the key
from the cell of your limitations
and remain like that –
built in your shadow
in the semi-eternal walls
impassively watching
as every demon, ghost, beast in you
became fed up with rats and roaches
and in the chute heading toward this world
bitten
bleeding
minutes
are rolling down.

Bissera Videnova Bulgaria

Translated into English by Vantzeti Vassilev and Vasil Slavov

BEYOND

Beyond hopelessness
and predetermined doom.
There isn't a motive
fading away–
neither to water it
nor to put it on a pedestal.
Persistently it imposes itself

glimmering ember in the dusk
of moaning ashes.
The promises for a perfection are with a mission
and it doesn't matter if they will come true.
Without a sadness,
among blinding nudity,

there is no way to gather again the veils of the shame.
The skin is shivering under a piercing warmth.
Fear which accompanies the passion is lacking.
Autopsy of the sincerity.
Every uncertainty is vulgar
and the hidden word—cynicism.

Bissera Videnova Bulgaria

Translated into English by Vantzeti Vassilev and Vasil Slavov

BY HABIT BLACK (SWAN)

He didn't learn to feel lonely
while his species lived in couples
silently sharing
the smooth surface,
which nobody dared
to look under.
They taught him to feel not wanted
without understanding
that the glossy shine of his black feathers
couldn't substitute the vanity of the white ones.
He learned to swim
as if on a stage
lacking the encouraging applause
... and to fly
impossible alone -
to wave his wings here,

to provoke storms there,
by habit
remaining
without
the feeling of You.

Bissera Videnova Bulgaria

Translated into English by Vantzeti Vassilev and Vasil Slavov

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

THE SEVENTH QUARRY PRESS

Editor - Peter Thabit Jones

Consultant Editor, America - Vince Clemente

Consultant Advisors, America -

Stanley H. Barkan, Carolyn Mary Kleefeld, Patricia Holt

The Seventh Quarry Press,

8 Cherry Crescent, Parc Penderri, Penllergaer,

Swansea SA4 9FG,

Wales, U.K.

email info@peterthabitjones.com

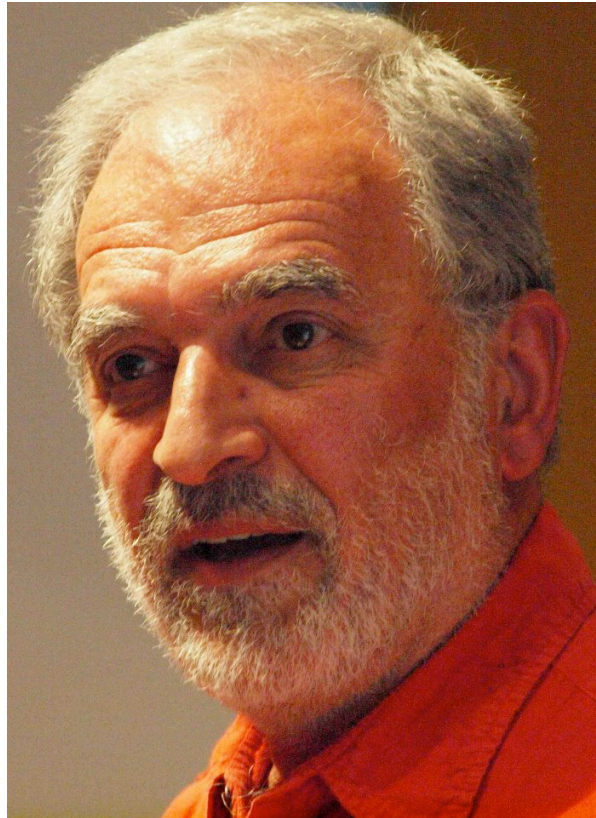
www.peterthabitjones.com

— The Seventh Quarry Swansea Poetry Magazine —

— Poetry, art, literary and children's books —

— DVDs/CDs —

Interview with Bulgarian writer Vantzeti Vassilev



Vantzeti Vassilev© 2015 Vantzeti Vassilev

Peter Thabit Jones: *When did you first start writing?*

Vantzeti Vassilev: I started writing in my late thirties. My first novel “The Seeds of Fear” was published in 1991. I described the life in Bulgaria during communism, seen through my eyes. I included authentic stories of seven former prisoners of the concentration camps in Bulgaria. Such a book could send the author directly to the jail. It was hidden in the beehive of the family in my mother's native village. Then I escaped Bulgaria, illegally crossing the boundary with the manuscript tied to my legs with stockings for varicose vein protection. It was

published after the collapse of the communism.

PTJ: *What were your first influences?*

VV: My early influence was German literature. Then English and American authors. To summarize in general at the end: Cervantes, Dostoyevsky, Joyce, and Marcel Proust.

PTJ: *What is the writing scene like in Bulgaria?*

VV: The authors in Bulgaria (there were just very few exceptions) usually pay to be published. Then they pay some critics to be presented. Do you think one can filter the good poetry or novel from the bad? It will be an extremely difficult task for the future generations of critics to do that. But recently this practice is changing by one or two publishing houses. The normalizing is going very slow.

PTJ: *How important do you think writing is in a world dominated by increasing technological developments?*

VV: If you mean the radio, the TV, etc. they are taking away the readers. If you mean the e-books, I'm sure they are adding new readers.

PTJ: *What are you working on at the moment?*

I'm working on my fifth novel. It's about crime and a punishment. I met three killers in my life, all of them political. They were with different ideological beliefs. The first one killed the principal of the high school who was a fascist, the second was a communist executioner and the third one was a deputy chief of a concentration camp. I'm gathering them in one character.

THE JAY

In the early afternoon of a warm October's day the old Levent stopped in front of the door of the boutique coffee shop "At Krume", located at the end of the village. The dust on the iron grille of the door and gratings of the windows showed that the owner hadn't opened it in a long time. The gratings were made of armature and looked liked those in the jails, so nobody can sneak between them, but instead of vertically they

were installed horizontally. At the ends of every two adjacent poles were welded two semicircles, the ends of which were curved in smaller semicircles, creating a decoration which had the purpose to protect the shop from intruders. Levent turned his head timidly to the left, to the right and behind. There was nobody. He pushed his nose through the gratings. His eyes looked around. It was clean. The shelves were empty. He was going to leave but he thought he saw a spinning notice on the wall across from him: "You didn't come to my funeral! I was waiting for you!" He uttered it several times before it disappeared in the wall in the same way it had come - as if swallowed in an imaginary funnel. He had lived in New York for 25 years - enough to realize he was at Times Square. He wasn't superstitious but the notice unnerved him. He turned back his head and looked around. There was nobody. Down the road, on the trunk of the willow tree bending above the long basin of the water fountain with the spout, the obituary of the owner had been posted. The reading of it unleashed a stream of memories, flooding his consciousness, without rage, without following chronology, only adding things which weren't written on the lonely sheet of paper tacked to the bark of the willow: secret agent of the notorious KGB, having reached the rank of colonel, having spied on a large contingent of people, having persuaded, promised, threatened; his reports had sent a large number of people into exile; with the clean conscience of his twisted beliefs he had illegally entered the apartments of his victims, convinced that he was serving the right cause. . . The departed man was the owner of the coffee-shop and Levent wanted to search for his traces. He shook his head to convince himself that he wasn't dreaming and stared at the wall again. There was nothing there. He waited for a few more minutes and headed towards his car. A wheezing sound of rusty hinges startled him. He got chills. He slowly turned around. There was only a silence which seemed to go over the hills of the surrounding mountain and continue into the endlessness. He glimpsed reflections on the window. He hurried back, pasted his nose on it and startled began to read the new message revolving on the wall: "My soul will haunt these places for up to 40 days after my death! Come before the last day! Come early in the morning, before sunrise, so we can talk! Do not come later! Come, please, otherwise I won't be forgiven! I will give you the names of all those who informed me! The volunteers and the forced ones."

He stood for several minutes after the last word had disappeared between the shelves. He heard a rustling of wings. His eyes followed the sound and saw the

silhouette of a jay, rotating on the branch of the tree on the other side of the road, as if it was a dancing dervish. It made a dry admonishing shriek. He lifted his heavy legs and retreated backwards. The bumper of the car bent his knees. . . that dread, that fear engulfed him again which had made him stiff when he received a summons from this man and had to go to the ever changing places of interrogation.

The dead man was his major persecutor. He had laid his traps in all of his activities until there was nothing else left but to run. That man had made him an exile.

Sometimes, especially there, across the ocean, Levent was feeling an irresistible desire to find and ask him: “Why?” What action of his had added his name in the list of the persecuted? But the answer was coming clear and unrelenting, unspoken by anybody. His own fate was talking to him, leading him on the paths of his exile, through the obstacles of nature, through the bushes and the open meadows on which he was crawling like a target, through the border, where the people who could stop him and asked him: “Who are you and where you go?” All these vagaries of the mind ended with the memory of the fierce will. The will which was spreading in his blood and gradually infecting the cells of his body. The will which had sharpened his senses like a wolf’s to smell danger from afar and had not allowed him to make mistakes.

He counted the days from the death of the man. The service was supposed to be held on the next day. In the morning he got up, prepared himself quickly and jumped in the car. He was driving with the uneasy feeling that he was again obeying that man even though he was dead. Levent lived in the next village to his. He reached it in two minutes instead of five.

It was quiet and tranquil. The valley had fallen into an autumn lethargy. The village graveyard was located on the north slope and the sun was showing later. They had at least two hours to talk with the departed. “Would there be enough time for him to tell me about so many events?” Levent asked himself and laughed at the absurdity of the purpose leading him to the cemetery. He tried to calm himself but just the opposite,

his anxiety was growing in the same way as during the time when that man was chasing him.

Levent assumed he would find the grave easily by the newly dug dirt. While walking toward the gate, a wind started blowing, then it intensified, started to play in front of his eyes, made a whirl and from it, as if from nowhere, a jay appeared, landed on the arch of the gate and shrieked sharply. Nervous, Levent stopped and looked at it. It was the same bird he saw at the coffee-shop.

In that moment he heard a shot. The jay spread its wings helplessly and fell on the ground. He didn't see any smoke from the direction of the shot. Scared, he started backing up towards his car. The graveyard was silent. Levent mustered some courage and proceeded forward to the gate. He removed the small hook at the end of the chain which held both wings together and untied it. Just now he saw his fingers were trembling. He searched for the corpse of the jay. He lifted the lowest branches of the dead cypress next to the gate. There was no trace of it. He rushed furiously through the rows of monuments searching every inch of soil. Then he went back to the cook-house. The little square in front of it was paved with cobblestone- no place for the bird to hide. He walked around. There was no sign of it.

“Bad omen!” Levent told himself and run back to the car. His body had become an asylum of fear again. He started the engine and headed back home. He realized he was going to pass by “At Krume” again and he didn't want that. The only way to go around was to drive on the dirt road on the other bank of the river but he didn't know its condition. He crossed the bridge over the river and turned on it. It wasn't that bad until the limits of the village but as soon as he passed the last house, the road worsened. The two left tyres were about 30 centimeters higher than the right ones. To avoid a problem he decided he would drive slowly. He continued but at one curve the creek had carved the lower level of the road and his first thought was that the car will flip over. He stopped and got out of the car to survey. He saw old tyre prints from a tractor. There was yellow muddy water from the last rain in the small rectangular shapes left by the

tyres. If he maneuvered well he would pass through, but if one of the wheels skidded in the mud, then there was no leaving this place.

He felt that someone was watching him. On the right there was a pear tree with branches weighed down with fruit. There was only one dry branch and the bird was perched on it. He looked at it. The same! Nobody could convince him otherwise. But hadn't he heard a shot?

He chose not to take a risk. He jumped in the car and put it in reverse. There was no other choice - he must pass by "At Krume". He fixed his eyes ahead, pressed the gas pedal and flew past the coffee-shop. He parked the car next to their old barn, went inside it and headed to the upper right corner of the crib. He remembered the stone behind which he used to hide his things when he was young - the last one before the ceiling rested on the column. He cleared the huge spider webs, full of dead bodies of small flies, removed it and thrust his hand in the hole that opened up. He took out a small bundle, put the stone back in its place and went out in the light. He untied the knot and dumped the contents. A glass ball fell first, then a few more, and a wooden slingshot at last. The leather pouch for the stone looked preserved. He stretched the rubber bands. The rubber strained, little bright parallel strips appeared in it and before reaching its maximum extension, it broke. Both sides almost simultaneously. First the left one, then the right a second later. He thought for a little bit, then entered the house. He took the scissors. He went to the river where in fact was the village dumping-ground. He had seen few tyres there. There were four, as if some owner had changed all his old tyres at once, but this did not seem to be the case. The tyres were of different sizes and different brands. He ripped open the first one. It wouldn't do, it was empty. He looked at the other three. He chose the oldest, pushed the edge of the scissors and saw the inner tube. He widened the hole and started dragging it out. He cut two wide strips from it, stretched them, and saw they were good. He approached the swift current of the river. The sun beams were playing with the current, creating sparkling stripes like winding snakes. On the sides they were blending with the colors and patterns of the fall, and ahead, towards the horizon, turning in an oscillating radiance. The water smelled of honey and herbs. He dipped his hands. The coolness crawled along his skin like a wave of goose bumps which appeared right away and made his

hairs stand. The cool touch of the water calmed his excited nerves. He felt a need to stand on the bank and look at the play of the sun with the water and the pebbles on the bottom, to walk upstream, then back down and look at different sights, but he quickly chased away that wish. He had something else to do. He went around the sandy stripe on which some thirsty bees had landed to drink water. He picked a few oval pebbles and stuffed them in the pocket of his jacket. He went back home, found copper wire, pushed the rubber stripes through the holes of the leather pouch of the slingshot and tied them with the wire. He entered the bedroom. The calendar on the wall had stopped counting the time a few years ago. He tore off the top page, jumped over the doorstep without closing the door and went in the neighbors' garden. Their house, as all the rest in the village, was deserted, the glass in the windows was broken. Except for two old men, nobody lived in the village. He taped the sheet on the window frame. He walked away from it in long strides as if measuring the distance. He had counted up to ten. He turned around, took out the slingshot, picked one of the pebbles and placed it in the leather pouch. He squinted, aimed, stretching the rubber bands to the limit, and released. The pebble flew sideways and hit the wall. He even missed the window frame. He repeated the shot. It was again off the mark, in the same direction, on the same side. He measured the rubber bands. One of them was longer than the other. He untied them, evened them out and tied them with the wire again. He stood in the same place, loaded the slingshot, stretched it and let go. There was a whistling sound, followed by the sharp hissing of torn paper. His face stretched in a satisfied smile.

He came back to his house only to lock it, then jumped in the car and hurried to the graveyard. He walked towards the grave with silent steps. The jay was gone and the mourners were late. Apparently it was still too early for the service. He turned around in a circle and saw it. There was a big ant hill next to the fence. The jay lay on the top of it with stretched wings. Its body was trembling (1) So the shot was real and not imagined. But then again, he saw it after the shooting. Maybe it was another one, a double. Birds look alike, except to the trained eye of an ornithologist or a hunter. He approached the ant hill. The jay was comfortably lying on its back on top of it and only its legs were moving from time to time. Ants crawled on it, poking their proboscises in its feathers, scratching feverishly. He stepped closer. Something was unusual in his movements and his belly was dragging in the dirt, sweeping blades of grass, sand

grains, dead insects, everything he was going through. He wanted to stop but some invisible force was pulling him further ahead. He looked around. An ant was crawling hurriedly next to him. He looked at himself and saw not two but several legs. He counted them, there were six. He bent his first left knee, then the right, then the next, until the last one. There was no mistake- there were six. And all were black as an ant's. His eyes sought the ant which was crawling next to him. While he was counting his legs it had advanced ahead of him. He rushed to catch up to it. He stood in front of it, in front of its two eyes, laying like two eggs that have just been broken out of their shells into the frying pan, or like the large black protective visors of motor bikers. His own reflection was staring back at him. There were two antennae sticking out in opposing directions. He noticed them just now. The twin ant next to him waved her antenna and led him to the bird. An unfamiliar impulse forced him to stick his proboscis in the bird's flesh. He stayed like this until something like a thought, only like a thought, went out of him, ahead of him: New York. And in response his proboscis accepted an answer coming from the jay: "How many are the Bulgarians there and where do they gather?" Levent-ant felt immense disgust. He strained the springs of all six legs and ran back. He found himself in the same place, in front of the ant hill, with two legs, as a man, not an insect.

He was watching this strange behavior of the ants for a long time, up until the moment the jay stood up, shook them off, looked arrogantly at Levent, hopped once or twice, flapping its wings, then flew away and landed on a branch of the nearest tree. The bird looked at him from up there and gave out its shriek - provocative, insolent. An absurd thought flashed in his mind - the ants, those disciplined workaholics had been supplying the collected information to the jay. They had turned into informers!

Levent took the slingshot from his pocket, found the glass ball, put it in its pouch, squinted at the jay and drew the rubber bands. The bird observed him arrogantly, deliberately shifted its body so it was an easier target, stretched out its neck and froze like that.

He felt some force was pulling him, the jay's eye enlarged, it was transforming into an Archaeopteryx (2). He lowered his eyes and determined he had not moved even an

inch. It was some unexplainable illusion. He looked ahead to see the eye like an enormous television screen. His gaze slid along some folds of the retina and stopped at the macula (3). Levent found himself standing in front of a wall with legible inscriptions, arranged according to some rules he could not understand. He loosened the rubber bands of the slingshot and read from left to right, from top to bottom. It went like this: “volunteers, forced, paid recruits, insubordinate, for eviction, for destruction. . .” Many more categories followed. He assumed that he was probably in the group of the insubordinate. He saw a button under the inscription and pressed it. A small screen appeared in front of him, almost pressing into his nose. “Ooo!” exclaimed Levent, amazed by the awesome technology. Suddenly the screen froze on the letter “L”. Underneath it he recognized his Dossier and looked for instructions on how to open it. Before he found any, a nagging shriek brought him out of the state he was in. As if kicked in the rear, he flew out of the eye of the Archaeopteryx and found himself in his initial position. And while it was diminishing and transforming again into a jay, Levent was raising his arms, drawing on the rubber bands of the slingshot.

The glass ball whistled through the air! There was a dull sound: “Thump”. The jay flipped over and fell a few feet ahead of him. Its eye was smashed. The glass ball had hit the head. He kicked it. Its body turned lifelessly. It was indeed dead.

Levent hurried to leave before the mourners showed up. He met them at the beginning of the road that led to the cemetery. They moved aside to let him through and turned their heads as if on command. They recognized him, casting hostile glances at him.

And down in front of the coffee shop they had placed a bright red star. There was no one left there. On impulse, he stopped to remove this now hateful symbol. Then he saw a new notice spinning furiously on the wall of the coffee shop:

“Now I am forgiven! Thank you! And the others?”

He went straight in the barn, removed the stone, and laid the slingshot with the

pebbles and glass balls inside the secret compartment, murmuring something to himself. A few ants, crossing his path, heard him say: "For the others!"

Vantzeti Vassilev Bulgaria

Notes:

1. Anting is a self-anointing behavior during which birds rub insects, usually ants, on their feathers and skin.
2. The first bird on Earth
3. Macula is an oval-shaped pigmented area near the center of the retina of the human eye

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry

A CHEMIST

What I am I am, and if that I am
it was because of a school-mate
and the wonders he told me as well,
it was because of a second-hand book
I was given by my dad, who went away
before I became what I am, now.
What I am I loved, and if that I am
it was because of Albion's spell,
it was because of atomists' madness,
which I learnt in my school desk,
and soon became what I loved,
and soon became what I am, now.
What I loved I am, and if I loved it,
it was because of molecules' alchemy
arranged in unexplored shapes,
who loved me, whom I missed,

who started her trip
with the languor of my kiss.

Raffaele Ragone Italy

THREAD OF LIGHT by Jackie Domingo

An illustrated collection of poetry and prose.

Paperback. Price: £16.70

Thread of Light, a collection of poetry and prose with a difference. The author has used some of her own photographs as illustrations, and added an Author's Note after each piece to give a brief comment and insight into her thoughts and feelings at the time of writing. Available via Amazon UK (with free postage and packing within the UK).

BEAUTY MARRED MY OWN LITTLE CARGO CULT

As a child, mother's aluminium head-lice comb
Was more beautiful than any princess's diadem.
I saw it's avatars in music box clockworks,
Turnstile's thaumatropes , science fair spectrometers
And lately, on the Grosvenor Road .

The park railings diffraction grating
Transfigured the wet road.

The tram-lined aurora of traffic and car lights
Slothful as electrophoresis.
Blink comparators of Belitia Beacons at either end.
Efflorescence of smashed glass
From bottles the winos had flung.
Chromatographs of oil leaks where I stopped
To cross the road;
Lit by white headlights, then jaundiced sodium
Like variegated Plasticene I overwrought to brown
As a child.
The sign subsumes the signifier in the park.

Eamonn Stewart Northern Ireland

AIDE MEMOIRE

In the snap, confetti the guests fling
were the scales from the butterfly's wings.
Coventrating not cleaving
the air that used to make it soar – became a simulacrum -
an electroscope flapping in a jar,
charged and discharged
by an electrophorus of despair –
the diaphragm applicator:

Only it, and the picture, are still there.

Eamonn Stewart Northern Ireland

EATING A JELLY HECTOGRAPH

The gelatine that bulked tinned ham

Was my mother's caviar.

A Jelly Hectograph that printed thoughts of her

Over and over

Diminishing with each generation..

For washing, the stylist tips back the chair

This is not the girl prostrate on the swing bridge

With the hair but a woman with COPD

And snagged nasal specs

Gasping for air.

In Belfast, in 'Writers Square

my estranged son playing Parkour.

He was a runaway, not a traceur –

Vaulting a handrail while I despaired.

So, I read a little more

Or glanced at the sky.

These thoughts against this setting died

Like Des Esseintes tortoise;
Nil nisi bonum de mortuis

Eamonn Stewart Northern Ireland

CONVERSATION WITH A CRITIC

Like selling crashed Shuttle parts on ebay
Publishing your sad life in poems
Is what you say
Although you could never put it that way.

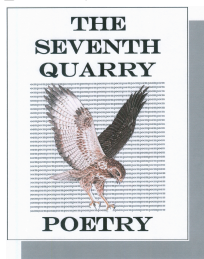
So, you'd prefer Chesley Bonestell's ideal space.
And prefer not to have real emotions thrust in your face.
Too much Joy Division in your youth.
One Sylvia Plath is enough.

Achilles was a bastard, 'though looked good in drag;
He *felt* it when Patroclus died,
And then would rather mourn than brag.

Why should a woman be seething
Because a man has feelings ?

Eamonn Stewart Northern Ireland

theseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarrytheseventhquarry



Tango Nights

A new book of poetry

by

Stanley H. Barkan

Published by The Feral Press,

PO Box 358

Oyster Bay, New York 11771

www.pp-pub.com

Paper edition: \$15.00

Hard cover: \$30.00

Shipping and handling within the continental USA: \$5.00/

outside the continental USA: \$10.00

NEW
from Cross-Cultural Communications

The Minstrel's Song

by Alyssa A. Lappen/Art by Helen Bar-Lev

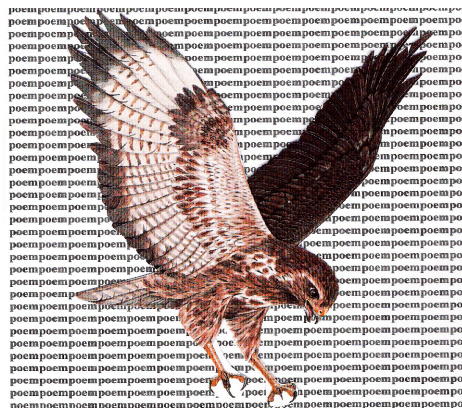
Paper edition: \$15.00/Hard cover: \$25.00/\$50.00 Limited edition/signed

Shipping and handling within the continental USA: \$5.00/outside the continental
USA: \$10.00

Cross-Cultural Communications, 239 Wynsum Avenue, Merrick,

NY 11566-4725

www.cross-culturalcommunications.com



LOOK OUT FOR ISSUE 23: Winter/Spring 2016

**WALES: Byron Beynon, Christopher Norris, Jean Salkildd, Ll. H. Nicholas,
Daniel M. Parry, Mike Jenkins, Sue A’Hearn**

**ENGLAND: Olivia Walwyn, Deborah Mason, Tim Gardiner, Clive Donovan,
MJ Duggan Jenny Hockey IRELAND: John Saunders**

NORTHERN IRELAND: Eamonn Stewart

ITALY: Lidia Chiarelli, Raffaele Ragone

INDIA: Namitha Varma-Rajesh

FRANCE: Antonia Alexandra Klimenko, Justine Milhé

BULGARIA: Bissera Videnova, Vantzeti Vassilev

GERMANY: Alex Deppert SWEDEN: Lolita Ray

AUSTRALIA: Ian C Smith CANADA: Huguette Bertrand

**AMERICA: Gloria Keeley, Lance Nizami, Gary Beck, Jane Blanchard,
John Hart, Fred Ostrander, Judith Yamamoto, Jon Miller, Patricia Nelson,
Bonnie Thomas, Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Carolyn Mary Kleefeld, Laura Boss,
Adam Szyper**

“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

ISSUE TWENTY-TWO SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015

ISSN 1745-2236

£4.50/\$15 EDITOR: PETER THABIT JONES