

# TRINACRIA

*Poems, Translations, Essays, Reviews*



Issue No. 13

Spring 2015

# TRINACRIA

*Voulant des clartés, vous en faites.*

—Charles Maurras

δίζημαι δ', ὅτινι θνατῶν κεχαρισμένος ἔνθω  
σὺν Μοίσαις·

I am going to seek out among mortals to whom I  
may come with the Muses, and be welcome.

—Theocritus, XVI, 68-69

# TRINACRIA

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TRINACRIA is published twice a year, in the Spring and the Fall. Issues of the journal are numbered consecutively. There are no subscriptions, but individual copies (current or old) of TRINACRIA may be purchased for \$15. Two complimentary copies are given to each contributor in every issue. Checks for any other copies should be made out to Joseph S. Salemi.

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ISSN 1944-8759

TRINACRIA is privately printed and privately distributed.

An abbreviated version of every issue of TRINACRIA can be viewed at: [www.trinacriapoetry.com](http://www.trinacriapoetry.com).

## A SEAMLESS GARMENT

Well, here we are, starting our seventh year of splendid warfare. I've attempted to hold each issue of TRINACRIA to a manageable size, but a variety of wonderful stuff—in verse, prose, and art work—keeps tempting me to add just a few more pages. I refuse to retain anything on file for future publication (that way madness lies), but I hate passing up something that strikes my fancy.

A listing for TRINACRIA now appears at Duotrope, an on-line resource for locating literary venues. As editor, I was asked to answer several brief *pro forma* interview questions pertaining to the magazine, in order to provide Duotrope's users with some clue as to our procedures and policies. Two questions in particular were curious. The first was "How much do you want to know about the person submitting to you?" To which I replied, with my customary bluntness, *Nothing at all*. The succinctness of that answer may strike some as rude, but consider the matter from an editor's perspective. The most important thing a poet can do is send me excellent poetry. All the rest—the chitchat, the interaction, the on-line "friending," the gossip, the networking, the buzz and burble of readings and conferences—all of that can go right into the garbage can. Poetry isn't a church social or a tailgate party, dammit! I don't publish *poets*; I publish *poetry*. If you can't comprehend that distinction, you have a problem.

The other question pertained to computer use: "How important do you feel it is for publishers to embrace modern technology?" Now an off-the-wall question like that is symptomatic of the digital hard-on that too many people in the modern world have. First off, the question is pointless, except as a way to provide the respondent with an opportunity to orate on the blessings of computers and the detestable "social media" that computers have spawned. Second, what the hell does it have to do with poetry? My response was as follows: *The only important thing about publishing a poetry magazine is the quality of*

*the poems that appear in it. Technology is not an end in itself; it's merely the means whereby text gets printed. TRINACRIA makes use of a computer solely for convenience, but TRINACRIA will be remembered in its hard-copy manifestation, not because of any damned digital razzle-dazzle.* I hope that such a reply is apodictic enough to stave off any other stupid questions.

This issue contains several more unpublished poems by Alfred Dorn. From time to time TRINACRIA will print other new Dorn poems, as a tribute to the man and his art. We also have an excellent article by Arthur Mortensen on the work of the engraver and mezzotint artist John Sartain; and George Sylvester Viereck's famous description of the diplomatic scenario that preceded the outbreak of the First World War. John Whitworth's delightful book *Girlie Gangs* is reviewed, to accompany the first appearance of his poetry in our pages. We try to have a substantial selection of good English prose in every issue, in order to emphasize our belief that literature is a seamless garment. Poets who can't write clear prose, or essayists who don't appreciate a well-crafted poem, are in this editor's view unfortunate cripples.

We now come to the Pushcart Prize nominations for Issue # 12. The poets so honored, in alphabetical order, are these:

- Carol Frith for her "Erotic Gardens," a somewhat unorthodox villanelle that presents a playful erotic meditation on the Garden of Eden, and on the ambiguous responsibility for mankind's fall.
- David Hedges for his "Specific Gravity," a droll *terza rima* narrative of Archimedes' discovery of the principle of water displacement, juxtaposing mathematical perception with elements of farce.
- T.S. Kerrigan for his "A Homecoming in the Next Parish Over," a tetrameter sonnet with an intricate rhyme scheme that skillfully conjoins the pleasure and danger of memory with an imagined walk through an old neighborhood.

- Athar C. Pavis for her “On Public Mourning,” a bitter lament for a dead relative, commenting sardonically on the pretension of hypocritical public grief when contrasted with the intense privacy of the speaker’s genuine loss and remembrance.
- Charles Southerland for his “Eclipse,” an unusual Petrarchan sonnet on the gulf between age and youth, hinging on the conceit of the sun’s eclipse as mirrored in the movements of a girl’s body.
- Leo Yankevich for his “The Donetsk Morgue,” a trimeter depiction of the horrors attendant upon the fighting in the Ukraine, with a particularly gruesome vision of mutilated corpses.

One thing that strikes me about these six poems is how very different each of them is from the other. They are unique expressions of the individual personalities that produced them, and yet they all partake of that transpersonal literary excellence that TRINACRIA was founded to support and celebrate. How different from the homogenized sameness and *bien-pensant* uniformity that mark so much of approved American mainstream poetry! As long as I can find and print poems of this caliber, editing TRINACRIA is well worth my time and effort.

Joseph S. Salemi  
Woodside, New York

## Table of Contents

### Poetry

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Alfred Dorn.....   | 9-12  |
| John Whitworth.....  | 13-16 |
| William Shakespeare ( <i>translated by Henry Latham</i> ).....           | 17-20 |
| James Kenneth Stephen.....   | 21-24 |
| Tom Riley.....   | 25-26 |
| Leo Yankevich.....   | 27-28 |
| Marly Youmans.....   | 29-30 |
| Philodemus of Gadara ( <i>translated by Joseph S. Salemi</i> ).....      | 31-32 |
| Malcolm Paige.....   | 33-34 |
| Claudia Gary.....  | 35-36 |
| Lee Slonimsky.....   | 37-38 |
| Derek Burgoyne.....  | 39-40 |
| Dante Alighieri ( <i>translated by Richard O'Connell</i> ).....          | 41-44 |
| Craig Daniel Koon.....   | 45    |
| Carol Frith.....   | 46    |
| Roy Campbell.....  | 47-48 |
| Angelique Wellish.....   | 49-50 |
| David Hedges.....  | 51-52 |
| J.B. Sisson.....   | 53    |
| Charles Baudelaire ( <i>translated by J.B. Sisson</i> ).....             | 55-58 |
| Lewis Turco.....   | 59-61 |
| Norman Ball.....   | 62    |
| Juliana Beedy.....   | 63-64 |
| Paul Malamud.....  | 65    |
| Don Thackrey.....  | 66    |
| Jennifer Reeser.....   | 67-70 |
| João Cabral de Melo Neto ( <i>translated by Richard O'Connell</i> )..... | 71-74 |
| Candace Ruggieri.....  | 75-76 |
| Daniel Fernandez.....  | 77-78 |
| Dennis N. O'Brien.....   | 79    |
| Mary Kipps.....  | 80    |
| Richard O'Connell.....   | 81    |

|                              |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| E.M. Schorb.....             | 82      |
| Karen Kelsay.....            | 83-84   |
| Frederick Feirstein.....     | 85-86   |
| Melissa Peralta-Hovejos..... | 87      |
| Sally Cook.....              | 88-90   |
| C.B. Anderson.....           | 91-94   |
| Arthur Mortensen.....        | 95      |
| Frederick Turner.....        | 96      |
| Jared Carter.....            | 97-100  |
| Jane Blanchard.....          | 101-102 |
| Joseph S. Salemi.....        | 104-110 |

## Prose

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Joseph S. Salemi, <i>A Rollicking Bollocks!</i> ..... | 111-116 |
| George Sylvester Viereck, <i>June 28, 1914</i> .....  | 117-122 |
| Arthur Mortensen, <i>John Sartain</i> .....           | 123-131 |
| Joseph S. Salemi, <i>The Unwanted Voices</i> .....    | 132-138 |
| Contributors.....                                     | 139-140 |
| Statement of Core Principles.....                     | 141-142 |

Alfred Dorn

## With Older Eyes

Almost a lifetime late, I visited  
the street that trapped my first and longest years.  
Would half-loved grownups I had spurned and fled  
meet the returning ghost with smiles or sneers?  
No chance. There would be no Methuselahs  
to charge me with some unforgiven prank.  
Those who had not retired beneath the grass  
were probably wheelchaired zombies, brain gone blank.

In faces breezing past I ached to find  
grandparent in the grandchild. No success.  
Except for that sequestered room, the mind,  
memory has no permanent address.  
Only two greeted me, though neither spoke:  
a house I had escaped, an ageless oak.

John Whitworth

## Love at First Sight in Edinburgh 1963

September rain in Princes Street,  
Crowblack umbrellas, splashing feet.  
I wore my collar up and you  
Were running for a 22.

I'm on that bus, drenched with the weather,  
And see you running hell-for-leather.  
You grab the pole and swing aboard,  
With teeth and laughing eyes. Sweet Lord,

Your golden summer scents the breeze,  
I am enamoured of your knees.  
Whoever loved who loved not at  
First sight? I saw and that was that.

I kissed your gringful, sinful mouth,  
Your East, your West, your North, your South,  
So supercharged and superfine,  
And once miraculously mine.

The years, they slip away like thieves,  
Deciduous as autumn leaves.  
I see you running, running yet,  
And Princes Street all shining wet.

Leo Yankevich

## Lazarus

I came back, the wind whistling in my ear,  
dove on my elbow, crow on my torn cuff,  
but I could not remember; the long lost year  
having left the hourglass like the love

that sifted through my hands less able now.  
Dry mouth my only friend and fiercest foe,  
I wobbled past each flowering branch and bough,  
neuropathy on fire from sole to toe.

Lightning in a bottle lit my way  
to where the moss was lush upon the stones,  
and crosses mocked the many shades of grey,  
the shadows over my skin, skull and bones.

Claudia Gary

## Song of the Aspirant

I want to be a writer  
although I hate to read.  
Disgorging true emotion  
is really all I need.

What was that word, “revision”?  
How tedious and lame  
to keep me from the microphone  
and complicate the game.

I want to be a poet  
but I’m rarely in the mood  
to take that awful tonic—  
what’d you call it, “solitude”?

So let’s all sit together,  
because that’s very cool  
when putting words on paper—  
I *miss* being in school!

I hope to be a poet  
though I have nothing to say,  
so all I need’s a little “prompt”  
to get me on my way.

A few short minutes later  
when you call me to the stage,  
I’ll read my brand-new masterpiece,  
a master of this age.

Derek Burgoyne

## Trochaic Couplings

*Intercourse is a particular reality for women as an inferior class; and it has in it, as part of it, violation of boundaries, taking over, occupation, destruction of privacy, all of which are construed to be normal and also fundamental to continuing human existence.*

—Andrea Dworkin

She's in heat and I'm in rut—  
God, I love this little slut.

Once a couple starts to tingle,  
Time to let pudenda mingle.

Hump her once and hump her twice  
And—if I can do it—thrice.

After all this carnal linkage  
Should my hard-on show some shrinkage

I'll just wait about an hour  
Till I get back penile power

And I'll spread her legs again  
To satisfy our fleshly yen.

There's nothing like some good hard porkin'—  
Go to hell, Andrea Dworkin.

Paul Malamud

## Greece

- I. Here is a silver synopsis where waves whisper  
from the Aegean blowing on the shore.  
  
In Olympia, sunlight gilds the shards  
of wrecked stone temples under olive trees  
  
amidst red and white flowers where Zeus walked,  
by cypresses, with whirring bumblebees.
- II. I gawk in the center of the stadium  
under a vortex of blue sky, and climb  
  
silky marble bleachers in the theater  
of Epidaurus, high above the plain;  
  
a worn, curved armrest on a marble seat  
is all that's left of someone's memory.
- III. Now I can stand on top of the citadel  
at Mycenae where Agamemnon lived  
  
and died and look down at the wild valley  
he looked out on the day he left for Troy.
- IV. This place, so drowned in ancient darkness, loss,  
and golden light, seems like a long-lost home,  
  
and the Aegean, a diamond necklace,  
that's always been here, laughing in the sun.

Jennifer Reeser

## Not So, Love

If one should come to rip your heart in half,  
sweet princess, breaking up that Kelly grace,  
don't cry to me, for I shall only laugh,  
whatever grief may mar your pixie face.  
I wish you all the luck this world contains—  
sincere in faith, with sanctified respect—  
for finding one more pure, with fewer stains,  
of deeper soul, or higher intellect.  
Mine is a fairy's wish that you will need  
more than the Greek, more than the greatest friend,  
more than the fantasy of being freed,  
more than this stale affair you want to end,  
more than a satin, Cinderella glove.  
Freedom is bought or fought for; not so, love.

Candace Ruggieri

## Western Feminists Explain Their Silence on ISIS to Moslem Women

*Trigger warning:* If you are a left-wing feminist bitch,  
you might be offended by this poem.

Your family's killed and you're enslaved  
To vicious males, uncouth, depraved.  
Kurdish girls, accept your fate—  
We're silent on the Islamic State.

A burqa wraps you like a shroud;  
To think or speak you're not allowed—  
Though sexism is a thing we hate,  
We're silent on the Islamic State.

You're dragged from school, sold off as whores  
To old men with venereal sores.  
Alas, your pleas don't carry weight—  
We're silent on the Islamic state.

Dissent from what the Prophet said,  
You're stoned to death, or lose your head.  
Although such views are out of date,  
We're silent on the Islamic State.

You're cowed and beaten, kidnapped, whipped,  
Rights denied, clitoris clipped...  
You'll just have to pay the freight—  
We're silent on the Islamic State.

Moslem women, you don't count;  
We're simply disinclined to mount  
Campaigns to set these problems straight—  
Hence silence on the Islamic State.

Let the Right speak up for you;  
We're loath to do what those guys do.  
We'll just sit and meditate  
In silence on the Islamic State.

We honor and respect "The Other"  
(Every Moslem is our brother)  
So sisterhood will have to wait—  
We're silent on the Islamic State.

Melissa Peralta-Hovejos

## An Object Lesson from Ferguson, Missouri

*In honor of Officer Darren Wilson of the Missouri police,  
who shot and killed Michael Brown, a criminal piece of  
ghetto garbage, on August 9, 2014.*

Advice to all the ghetto slime  
Who walk the streets in hoodies: Crime  
Will often go unpunished, yet  
There are occasions when you'll get  
The retribution you deserve.  
If—stupidly—you have the nerve  
To mess around with our police  
Remember: each cop has a piece,  
And you might get a taste of Fate—  
Some hot lead from a .38.  
All your loudmouth hip-hop jive  
Won't insure that you'll survive.  
Our cops still pack some fire power—  
Enough to make you cringe and cower,  
And frankly, we all smile when thugs  
Are laid out cold by well-placed slugs.

Sally Cook

## A Town

The difficulty of describing how  
This town once was may only be because  
So little happened then, compared to now.  
Still, what occurred, the bustle and the buzz,

Filled every room in each small house and more  
To overflowing with the acts of people  
Engaged in vicious inter-tribal war  
Beneath the shadow of a spiky steeple.

Spite overflowed down narrow streets, where schools  
Of teachers worked to uplift families,  
Tried hard to fashion scholars out of fools  
Who much preferred to laze beneath the trees

On warm spring days when no one wanted books,  
And curiosity ebbed lower than  
Dry creek banks, and best efforts went to looks  
At breasts and thighs. Each lady had a fan,

Sat silent on her creaky porch at night  
And never thought to raise her eyes to stars;  
Just swatted fragile moths that loved the light  
While most men stayed inside, played pool in bars.

Arthur Mortensen

## The Ring

A momentary beam of blue,  
A glint of silver, flash of white,  
The sun's divided rays on view  
Across your fingers—what delight  
To see our promise radiate  
From hand to face and far above,  
Kissing the ceiling while we sate  
The longings crying out from love.

And yet this living symbol formed  
Beneath a billion tons of stone,  
Recovered when poor men had wormed  
A mile below a field of bone—  
Skeletons of women, men  
Who, lovers once, had perished then.

Jane Blanchard

## Exposé

My husband has been having an affair—  
For quite a while, so hints and threats suggest;  
Why, how, with whom is neither here nor there.

Denial has not made me unaware  
Of what has yet to be disclosed, confessed:  
My husband has been having an affair.

Distraught, confused, I travel to his lair,  
A common key-card room-for-rent lust-nest:  
Why, how, with whom is neither here nor there.

The evidence is more than I can bear;  
For hours I remain awake, distressed:  
My husband has been having an affair.

I make some calls, take photographs, but dare  
Not ravage all; I try to eat, to rest:  
Why, how, with whom is neither here nor there.

Tomorrow will still come; I must prepare  
For challenges that I cannot contest:  
My husband has been having an affair;  
Why, how, with whom is neither here nor there.

# A Rollicking *Bollocks!*

by

Joseph S. Salemi

Review of: John Whitworth, *Girlie Gangs*  
London: Enitharmon Press, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-907587-05-4

The problem with reviewing a book as clever, entertaining, and literate as John Whitworth's *Girlie Gangs* is one's impulse to quote far too many excerpts from it. Nearly every quatrain or stanza in this collection has an unforgettable gem, each as delectable as a bonbon, and begging to be cherry-picked for quotation. I'll try to restrain myself.

But first, some general comments. Whitworth is a master of something very rare these days: perfect English, pure English, racy English, comical and yet erudite English—an English as traditional as Pimm's on the lawn, but as up-to-date and zingy as the latest rave scene. This is a hard feat to manage but Whitworth does it easily, and apparently effortlessly. His is a poetry of witticisms, barbs, unexpected thoughts, felicitous turns of phrase, and syntactical constructions so limpid and crystalline that you smile in both admiration and amazement. Whitworth could serve as the epitome of what that idiot Tony Blair called "Cool Britannia." Reading his *Girlie Gangs* is like reciting Praed as you thunder down Kentish country lanes on a Triumph Bonneville.

Take his wonderful trochaic "Far Holier Than Thou," a thumpingly funny spoof of St. Simeon Stylites, the pillar eremitical. The saint speaks:

Now the desert's growing chiller and I'm living on a pillar, an  
Address a hundred feet above the ground.  
You may wonder why I do it, but there's really nothing to it.  
I'm a saint and I'm the saintliest around.

...  
As a youth, alas, I lusted after prominently busted  
Shady ladies in diaphanous attire.  
But as Simeon Stylites I reject such flighty nighties,  
They are passports to the everlasting fire.

It's not just the unapologetic hammer-and-tongs of the meter that delights here. There's the perfect internal rhyme, and the expert weaving of tetrasyllabic words like *prominently* and *diaphanous* into the drum-tight structure. Or consider the skipping anapests of "Cheesy Song," a poem that takes up G.K. Chesterton's complaint that there are no poems about cheese:

They can roar out a toast to a sizzling roast.  
They can whisper a strophe to stew.  
They can chant an address to a haggis, no less,  
(Though it's best to be Scotch when they do).  
They can eulogize booze any way that they choose  
In a verse that's as long as you please.  
And there's many a fine disquisition on wine,  
*Yet the poets are silent on cheese.*

How many *soi-disant* poets these days can knit together something as exquisite as that? The alliteration, the anaphora, the mix of registers, the internal rhyme—all are handled with deft assurance. And lest you think Whitworth is exhausted after that *tour de force*, watch him continue:

Where oh where is the Milton who'll celebrate Stilton,  
The Rimbaud who'll rhapsodize Brie?  
Where the curd-kissing Homer who'll praise the aroma  
Of Cheddar on toast for your tea?

Whitworth likes the less common meters such as the dactylic and



imitate other poets, as he does in the hysterically funny “Heart of Elvis,” where he rewrites Presley’s *Heartbreak Hotel* in the style of Robert Browning, and *Blue Suede Shoes* in that of Swinburne. Sound impossible? Whitworth does it impeccably, and all three men would be proud. His real triumph in this area, however, is a rewriting of Hamlet’s soliloquy in the manner of W.S. Gilbert. I just have to quote a chunk of it:

It goes round in my head: am I better off dead,  
Is the game for a Dane worth the candle?  
Suppose I should chuck it and just kick the bucket,  
Would that be the act of a vandal?  
Is it better to go with the devils you know,  
Though they give you one hell of a buffet,  
And continue to try with a ‘never say die’,  
Or to tell them succinctly to stuff it?

This interplay of old and new is a trick that Whitworth seems to favor. He can take a hoary nursery rhyme and recharge it by tacking on a slickly cynical modern observation:

The King was in the counting house, counting out his money,  
The Queen was in the parlour, eating bread and honey.  
The money buys the honey but it buys a whole lot more  
For honey keeps a woman sweet and that’s what honey’s for.

Contemporary matters also come in for attention. One piece uses words and images from a Weldon Kees poem to describe the angst of a hit-man; and another comments disapprovingly on Sylvia Plath’s foolish choice of Ted Hughes for a husband. There are references to (and borrowings from) John Betjeman, Kobayashi Issa, Robert Graves, Thomas Middleton, Walter de la Mare, Gavin Ewart, and the *Bloodaxe Book of Poetry Quotations*. Another poem deals with a spate of philosophers from Socrates to Giovanni Gentile. Whitworth is omnivorous in his consumption of cultural material, using anything and everything to help devise a poem.

Everything seems to interest this poet: Margaret Mead on sex in Samoa, Hegel on men and women, Bing Crosby movies, Jane Austen novels, English-Australian cricket disputes, and the relative merits of lavatory paper. Curiosity and an irrepressible playfulness mark his work, as opposed to the droning High Seriousness that too many mainstream practitioners seem intent on expressing as they bore the crap out of us. Whitworth can be serious too—he has moving pieces on the death of a child, on his daughter’s work in a hospital, and an intensely introspective poem (“Last Night”). But he knows that the primary purpose of poetry isn’t to wail, moan, and descant on the sorry state of the cosmos. Its main task is to delight with verbal pyrotechnics that display the literary *virtù* of the poet! Your pain is not important. Your diction, tropes, and figures are.

Whitworth’s command of *copia* is more than admirable—it’s phenomenal. In a charmingly bizarre poem touching upon Sherlock Holmes (“Murky Business at 221B”) he conjures up a tale of a crazed uncle’s weird adventures east of Suez, and the man’s forced return to Surrey. The description of this uncle and his retinue is unforgettable in its sheer imaginative scope:

There he lives in wicked splendour in a folly on a hill  
With a score of dusky savages, alert to do his will,  
An albino Kurdish butler and a mistress from Brazil.

Lord! I swear you never saw the like, a godless foreign crew  
Who maintain a strange menagerie, as foreign people do:  
Viz. the Demon Duck of Doom, the Great Tasmanian Kangaroo,

Seven hydra-headed scorpions, an acephalous baboon  
And a colony of zombies purchased from the Cameroon  
Who will weep and wail and witter at the phases of the moon.

I can just hear the epicene little p.c. types in the workshops clucking and fretting over “insensitive language” and “racist overtones.” But Whitworth doesn’t give a monkey’s about puritanical twits of that kidney. And it is this sort of insouciant freedom that energizes and drives his poetry.

There is another thing I should mention, though it might seem minor to the reader. The poems in *Girlie Gangs* are printed in alphabetical order according to their titles. By doing this, Whitworth makes the crucial aesthetic point that a poem *stands or falls on its own*, and does not require the valorization or contextualization of some author-imposed sequence. Such a choice is a rollicking *Bollocks!* to the pretentious sods who tell you that your collection has to be “artfully arranged as an interplay of thematic concerns” (yes—that’s the kind of jargon these pompous buffoons spout). Whitworth, thank God, has ignored them.

There are other ways in which the poems in *Girlie Gangs* do not fit well with the public orthodoxy of Mainstream Mediocrity. They are mostly “light.” Some are *vers de société*. All are accessible. All are unashamedly literate and cultured. All are entertaining. To be explicitly precise, Whitworth pays not the slightest attention to the lethal pall of snobbish pretense that modernism has cast over contemporary poetry—the insufferable earnestness of endeavor, the wearisome High Seriousness, the posturing whine of navel-gazing adolescent self-importance, all of which have made poetry unmemorable and unreadable. Whitworth is a glorious atavistic throwback to the time when poetry was still an art, and not a glandular effusion or a fashion statement. On the evidence of *Girlie Gangs*, he’ll be remembered and read long after his trendy contemporaries are consigned to obscure footnotes.



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## Translated Writers

Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321)  
Charles Baudelaire (1821 – 1867)  
João Cabral de Melo Neto (1920 – 1999)  
Philodemus of Gadara (*circa* 110 B.C. – 35 B.C.)  
William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

# TRINACRIA

## *A statement of core principles*

We publish no free verse at all. We publish formal metrical verse only, following the example of the great pre-modernist masters, and of those contemporary writers who maintain that tradition.

We are not interested in poems that employ an excessive number of substitute feet. If we have trouble finding the stresses in your line, we will not publish your work.

We do not consider syllabic verse to be metrical verse. Moreover, we have a very limited tolerance for hypermetric lines and heterometric forms.

We are allergic to mid-line breaks, or anything else that gratuitously violates typographical conventions. We prefer left-margin capitalization of every line, but we recognize that this is not the practice of all poets.

We believe that the register of language in poetry should always be distinct from that of ordinary colloquial speech.

We believe that an excessive dependence on slant-rhymes and assonance in end-position is a sign of incompetence.

We do not publish poems that are vague, gaseous, or that indicate a flaccid and sentimentalizing mindset.

We do not publish poems that are primarily quoted dialogue, nor poems that make extensive use of quotation marks.

We judge poems primarily by their inherent craftsmanship, not their subject matter. We see no reason to publish a mediocre poem just because it trumpets virtuous sentiments, or expresses sincere feelings. We specifically refuse to evaluate any poem by the yardstick of political correctness.

At the same time, we believe that subject matter is another ingredient that goes into the overall aesthetic effect of a poem. For that reason we will reject metrically excellent poems if we find their subject matter boring or trivial or fatuous; or if the subject matter is handled ineptly; or if the subject matter does not suit the chosen poetic vehicle.

We believe that poems are fictive artifacts of a self-contained nature. For us, any poem that pretends to a bogus authenticity; or that consciously cultivates dissonance and asymmetry; or that deliberately avoids aesthetic closure, is *ipso facto* a failure.

We have taken as our watchword the sentence of Charles Maurras: *Voulant des clartés, vous en faites.* We believe that the primary task of a poet is not to discover beauty, but to create it with his own skill and energy.



*Voulant des clartés, vous en faites.*

Privately printed, published, and distributed. Not for general sale.

TRINACRIA  
ISSN: 1944-8759  
Price: \$15.00

Publisher and Editor:  
Joseph S. Salemi  
New York City