

TRINACRIA

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TRINACRIA

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FIRE FOUR!

Everyone is familiar with the stereotypical submarine warfare movie and its claustrophobic tension. You can name a slew of them: *Run Silent, Run Deep*; *The Enemy Below*; *Torpedo Alley*; *Das Boot*. And they all have the requisite scene of the sub's captain hunched by the periscope, sweaty and grim with intensity, as he fixes his sighting reticle on an enemy ship and grits through his teeth the order "Fire One! Fire Two! Fire Three!"

Well, *Fire Four!* Here we are after two years, still sending out torpedoes into the fat and lazy convoy of the Poetry Establishment. We'll continue to do so for the foreseeable future, since our financing is secure and interest in our journal grows more intense after the appearance of each issue. If I hadn't taken a solemn oath never to let it happen, we would have a huge backlog of accepted but not yet published work. Sorry, guys—I won't keep anything on file. Save those poems for the next submission period.

We have received a number of compliments on our tipped-in illustrations and their quality. Let me confess here that this facet of TRINACRIA is purely the result of what theologians call the *felix culpa*, or lucky fault. The editor's unfamiliarity with computers and desktop publishing left two unplanned blank pages in Issue #1. Rather than leave them bare, he decided to put in reproductions of a floral print and a Renaissance engraving. It took extra time and money, but the result was so striking that he determined to continue the practice in all subsequent issues. It gives TRINACRIA a special cachet that is missing from other magazines.

One tedious moron wrote in asking if we had "obtained permission" to use those centuries-old artworks. To whom I replied "No, we didn't. Have your lawyer contact Albrecht Dürer, Martin Schöngauer, and the Limbourg brothers to see if they have objections to that." When the poetry world is populated by timorous lemmings of this sort, what else can one say?

Another person wrote in to complain that we were "too erotic." In my view, that's like complaining that someone is too thin or too rich.

You can't be too erotic in an American poetry scene dominated by middle-class proprieties and Smiley-Face reticence. And our eroticism is the hairy, moist, and explicit genuine article—not the hearts-and-flowers pseudo-eroticism of mainstream poetry journals that pretend to be daring in this field. Our poets—both male and female—use real words and paint the real pictures. Got a problem with that? Read another magazine.

My many Fifth Columnists in the websites and the restricted discussion groups have reported to me that a general theme of inquiry that arises in those venues concerning TRINACRIA is basically this: *How can we stop it?* Well, I can squelch all discussion with a simple answer: *You can't.* Despite the ferocious efforts of some people to change matters, this is still a free country that enjoys the right of free speech. I know that this fact sticks in the craw of certain crypto-Stalinists in the poetry world, but we happy few at TRINACRIA will continue to take advantage of it and publish whatever we damned well please.

And now for our Pushcart Prize nominees for Issue #3. There were plenty of deserving poems to choose from, but here are the winners in alphabetical order:

- Catharine Savage Brosman for her “The Elixir of Love,” a meditation in limpid pentameter quatrains on a love that stretches over several years to an ultimate marriage, subtly paralleled by the memory of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*.
- Ann Drysdale for her “Perfect Binding,” a tetrameter dramatic monologue spoken by one lover to another in the bedroom, with Catullan echoes in the thirteenth and seventeenth lines, and all linked by the Donne-like conceit of the binding of a book.
- Arthur Mortensen for his “The Usual Happy Hour Tragedy,” a powerful *canzone* in the manner of Dante, presenting a bar-room confrontation that devolves into a complex argument about the interplay of truth, perception, and self-knowledge.
- Lee Slonimsky for his “Horse,” a sonnet with chiasmically rhymed quatrains that moves from the evolution of plants and animals to the

chance similarity of a gnarled oak to a horse, and ending with an imaginative leap that unites the pair in the energy of all living things.

- Gerald Sullivan for his “On the Threshold,” a series of quatrains that begins with the hint of squalid commercial sex in a hotel, but then slowly unfolds into a heartbreaking image of an incontinent elderly woman and her fears.
- Frederick Turner for his “Trapped and Free,” a powerful poem that contrasts the debilities of old age and the ever-youthful possibilities of new learning, in a *mise en scène* that presents the elderly speaker awaiting the arrival of his friendly young Chinese tutor.

Congratulations to all of these accomplished poets. I trust we will be seeing more of their fine work in future issues. And to our enemies, we say beware: our periscope is up and we are scanning the horizon.

Joseph S. Salemi
Woodside, New York

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Alfred Dorn

Dark Hotel

Death, poker-faced and wearing livery,
Stands in our neon-rainbowed night before
A dark hotel, observing silently
The guests who walk to shadows through its door.
The heart, believing where the brain denies,
Invokes a world beyond unopened drapes;
We seize the vagaries of occult eyes,
But from those shrouded rooms no word escapes.

We glimpse, or dream we glimpse, frail silhouettes
Of vanished friends and lovers wandering there.
Mind's catacombs of passions and regrets
Echo with phantoms melting in the air.
The world turns shadow where the doorman stands
With eyes of marble and with granite hands.

Peter Austin

A Christmas Letter

(Kept by the recipient for sentiment's sake)

Dear family and friends: this year
Has been a trying one, I fear:
In January, on the ice,
I slipped and broke my pelvis—twice.

In February, sore depressed
By weeks of doctor-ordered rest
And consequently soaring debts,
I overdosed on Percocets.

From March's winds and April's rain
I got pneumonia—again—
Which, in the month of bloom and bee,
Mutated into pleurisy.

A brief return to health I won
In June, beneath a balmy sun,
But ere July had murmured "Ciao,"
A melanoma marred my brow.

The doc said, radiating cheer,
"This chap, we'll charbroil: never fear!"
Then, not at all so merrily,
"There's always chemotherapy..."

October waxed; November waned
With yours—before, so lushly maned—
Unable to afford a rug
And balder than a ladybug.

It's spread to kidneys now, and brain;
I shall not see the spring again;
But who fears death, when life is hell?
PS: a merry Xmas!

—Nell.

Richard O'Connell

Neropolis

Petronius as usual slumped mute
In wine; outside, the City blazed away
The darkness. Trembling Nero tore his lute,
Trying to think of something grand to say;
But nothing came, except the breathless sobs
Of a bad boy trapped in his own misdeeds.
Below his balcony he heard loud mobs
Gathering the courage utter misery feeds.

Petronius yawned. The counselors looked grave
But dared not interrupt the poet's spell;
Besides they didn't want to help him save
The City or himself. Then heaven fell
On his fat face: "The slums of Rome are down."
Caesar cried out, "Let's build a brand-new town!"

Frank White

Carolina Clay

I cleaned my people's graves today,
And picked my own place in the clay.

I hardly knew a single scowl
That trailed me in the village prowl:
Three decades North and further ranged
Make me a stranger and estranged.

Here in the graveyard, though, alone,
I hold communion with my own:
A host of names all spelled like mine—
All prunings felled from the same vine.

The soil is rich for peach, white pine,
White oak, sweet corn, dark iodine.
You could have worse neighbors than these,
When you take refuge under trees.

This is my clay, this is my mold;
But I hold off, while I can hold.
I range the world to find my way,
Though all roads bring me home to stay.

They call this church and yard Hopewell.
What better bell for a death knell?

Carol A. Taylor

The Polyglot Makes Love

Me faltan words enough to say,
mon cheri, cuánto disfruté
those lovely hours que pasé
contigo when we stole away
from circumstance to spend the day
compartiendo “you know qué.”

I can't begin to expresar
the alegrías of mon coeur
avec les mots I struggle for.
Me dejás tongue-tied, muda, sourde.
I want to tell you tanto more,
but words elude me, mon amour.

Mais, still, I think that entre nous
there is comprensión. Pour tout
you've given me je sais que tú
sabrás the words que j'ai perdu
if I just say merci beaucoup;
je t'aime; te quiero; I love you.

Leo Yankevich

Pennsylvania Swamp

There is more here than mist,
duckweed and spatterdocks.
A bowfin, three feet long,
lurks amid the stalks

of cattails, preying on
a school of yellow bass.
A pickerel prowls amid
brown tamaracks and grass.

A snapper with musket shot
still lodged inside its tail,
devours a bloated frog,
exposing only its shell.

And at the water's edge,
a towering black gum,
old as the liberty bell,
watches deaf and dumb.

Its leaves soon will turn red
for the three hundredth autumn:
a leaf for every brave
buried at the bottom.

Sally Cook

Communication

I bought a ring, a cameo.
Her face was pale and worn
By time's abrasive ebb and flow.
I think I could have sworn
I saw her stare, quite pointedly—
A cold glare, out of stone.
She seemed to want to say to me
Why am I here alone?

You're not the only one, you know
Whose face is flat and flecked,
Though once we each had quite a glow,
A roseate effect
Carved out from life. I answer you,
Mute features on a shell,
But you are deaf; I can't get through.
Communication's hell.

Frederick Turner

The Cellist's Hand

For Gyöngy Erödi: with thanks for the six Cello Suites

Such ruthless thought lives in the cellist's hand
As if the cellist's mind, lost in the maze
Of meditation, were not in command
At all, and the fierce hand were that which plays.

Just as the elegant spider with her quick
And probing touch teases the gossamer
Into the web's shining arithmetic,
So this hand weaves its labyrinth's hexameter.

So swift are those white fingertips that rap
The ebony with such decisive blows,
How can the brain's intent make up the gap
Between the action and the self that knows?

Yet every nuance of the melody
In its long-drawn out skein of resonance
Is surely written in her memory,
And what is more intended than this dance?

We must inhabit time, then, in a way
That makes a thousand presents into one,
Weaving a freedom out of the swift play
Of all the cells wherewith the body's spun.

Revealed, then, under a high prayer
Of Bach's half-anguished gentle eloquence,
The falcon's talon and the spider's snare
Inform this long hand's fierce intelligence.

Don Thackrey

Dream Lover

I love the girls of any age or size;
Each one of them can make my spirits rise
And next in line can make them rise again.
No, I'm not Henry; they're not Anne Boleyn;
I want them all: no lady leaves or dies.

Folks castigate me, say I womanize,
But I deny it, for I idolize
Each one. It doesn't matter, fat or thin,
I love the girls.

If any girl gets jealous, whines or cries,
I can apply some heat to cauterize
Her wound, then pledge a troth that's genuine
And swear I'm yang and she's my only yin.
So, rondeau, sum it up: italicize
I love the girls.

Jennifer Reeser

Miniature: The Virgin Model

Beneath the robe, her heels and toes are bare,
An introspective effigy in whose
Imaginary sandal-flat-soled shoes
No martyr nor prospective saint would dare
To walk, nor work, nor lose what she would lose.
And of her mold, one might as well despair.
Below a cloak of apricot, her hair
Is parted as the Red Sea, no eyelash
To soften or obscure her doe-eyed gaze.
There is no marble in her to amaze.
The residents could call her stable trash.

O Mistress to a god you could not hold,
Touch, hear with your own ears and understand;
Inquisitive, but in the end resolved
To scandal, shame—I see you cross the sand
With bleeding, limping feet, as though on salt.
And I invoke you, formal to a fault—
That fault we share, of which we are absolved.

E.M. Schorb

Today, Noon Traffic Crowding

Today, noon traffic crowding, heat appalling,
I saw the double of someone I knew.
A face from long ago, I heard it calling
as plain as I might now be hearing you.

Thank God I'm not a king, or Canon Law
would have me married to the woman yet!
Pathetic creature! Not the one I saw.
That woman looked like one I would forget.

I mustn't be unkind. Resentment speaks.
So many years to hold a useless grudge.
Life's like a faulty sink from which love leaks.
Would you believe I stopped and couldn't budge?

Forgive my grief, then, when I turn aside.
I have at heart what I had thought had died.

Douglas G. Brown

Dactylic Whimsies

Tom Jefferson said to his slave Sally Hemings,
“My wife’s finally dead; so let’s breed like we’re lemmings.”
“Undress me, dear Master; then we’ll get it on,”
Said slave Sally Hemings to her owner Tom.

George Bernard Shaw asked of Edna Millay,
“Don’t you believe that I’d be a good lay?”
“I doubt that you know what your pecker’s made for,”
Edna Millay said to George Bernard Shaw.

Said Charles, Prince of Wales, to his Duchess Camilla,
“Like a tampon, my organ’s your vaginal filler.”
“I’m infused with a thrill every time it impales,”
Said Duchess Camilla to Charles, Prince of Wales.

Elizabeth Tilton told Henry Ward Beecher,
“You’re pretty well hung for a Protestant preacher.”
“Don’t mention my wife, or you’ll soon feel it wiltin’,”
Said Henry Ward Beecher to ’Lizabeth Tilton.

Said Senator Teddy to Mary-Jo K.,
“Let’s drive to the beach for a little foreplay.”
“I have this odd feeling that I’ll end up dead,”
Said poor Miss Kopechne to Senator Ted.

Michael R. Burch

Love Has a Southern Flavor

Love has a Southern flavor: honeydew,
ripe cantaloupe, the honeysuckle's spout
we tilt to basking faces to breathe out
the ordinary, and inhale perfume...

Love's Dixieland-rambunctious: tangled vines,
wild clematis, the gold-brocaded leaves
that will not keep their order in the trees,
unmentionables that peek from dancing lines...

Love cannot be contained, like Southern nights:
the constellations' dying mysteries,
the fireflies that hum to light, each tree's
resplendent autumn cape, a genteel sight...

Love also is as wild, as sprawling sweet,
as decadent as the wet leaves at our feet.

Karen Kelsay

Damselfly

Where estuary waters seep into
The muddy shore, and wet young willow shoots
Along the bay, I caught a damselfly
Sequestered near a sycamore tree's roots.

We spoke of rising moons, and how small bands
Of stars slip rings of gold around the world
In silent, opalescent sheen that glows,
Reflects on watercress—until it's swirled

Above the steady song of cricket feet.
And then, a darker note possessed the air,
While silver branches in the grove began
To echo dirges filled with hushed despair.

Then, evening spilled her shadowed dreams, and clouds,
With their relentless, monotonic sigh,
Spun restlessness across the bank—while we,
Like sanctified small angels, hovered by.

David W. Landrum

Lenin Burial Proposal

God, my friends, wears a baggy suit.

—Article in the *New Yorker*, speaking of
Lenin's corpse.

After a hundred years almost, I've read,
the Russians are debating whether they
should bury Lenin who, though he is dead
(but mummified to guard against decay),
has been perpetually shown in a display

in Moscow. People made the pilgrimage
in Communist times to wait in line then gape
at his long-pickled, dessicated visage—
at Lenin in a glass coffin's deathscape,
the Soviet Union's father's dried-up shape.

They're back to Russia now and wondering
if they should put his corpse into the ground.
The younger generation does not sing
the praise of Comrade Lenin—are not bound
to venerate or piously stand around

his casket. So why not quietly retire
the revolutionary—whom they had
instead of God? The masses don't desire
to view him reverentially and feel sad.
It seems, at last, they've figured out he's dead.

The Rhythms of Forests

by

J.B. Sisson

Review of: Richard Moore, *Pygmies and Pyramids*
Alexandria, Virginia: Orchises Press, 1998
ISBN 0-914061-71-2

If on a Tuesday evening in Copley Square in Boston in the 1990s you had seen him with his flashing eyes, his floating hair, you'd probably have scored him for a poet and retired English professor. You'd have been right. Richard Moore (1927-2009) was an extraordinary poet who taught at Brandeis University, Boston University, and the New England Conservatory of Music.

If on this Tuesday evening you had followed him into the Community Church of Boston and up three flights to the Guatemala Room overlooking the sunset on Trinity Church, beside its cubist reflection in the glass façade of the John Hancock Tower, and had observed him quietly presiding over the Agape Poetry Series, with its group of poets who gathered every week to read their poems and absorb his practical advice, you might not have recognized him by the biographical note in his book *No More Bottom*: "Richard Moore, who has been a pilot in the Air Force, a misfit in graduate school, and a sufferer in marriage, has for several decades been losing friends and alienating people with funny stories, comfortless poems, tricky essays, and nasty reviews." Comfortless poems? Take "The Plenitude of Poets":

The verse-making thirst's never slaked.
What if they bore you? They don't care.
And that is why, although half-baked,
poets are never rare.

For longer poems, try his book *Empires*, four blank-verse monologues spoken by the political animal Aaron Burr, the ruthless financier Jay Gould, the inventive mathematician Archimedes, and the savvy queen Cleopatra. What, an American poet writing about mathematics? Yes, and in *Pygmies and Pyramids* there's the sensuous rhapsody of "The Abacus." Among Moore's other books are his sonnet sequence *Word from the Hills*, his rodential epic poem *The Mouse Whole*, his syncopated verse apologia *The Naked Scarecrow*, his loony novel *The Investigator*, his supple translations of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Plautus's *The Captives*, and his tricky essays collected in *The Rule that Liberates*, in which he breathes new life into English prosody, re-evaluates some canonical poets, and raises the ballad "Sir Patrick Spens" from the depths of a sea of criticism.

The poems of *Pygmies and Pyramids* are written in a form that Moore identifies, in a prefatory note, as "an accentual adaptation of the classical elegiac couplet." Such dactyls are difficult to write in English yet seem effortless for Moore:

Gautama, pudgy and sacred, deserted his wife and his children,
 fled from the love of the flesh,
lusting for ultimate light.

In page after virtuoso page, Moore sings and fulminates a rolling thunder of savage indignation counterpointed by the mingled measure of his ironic wit. In contrast to our corrupt culture of avarice, war, and ecocatastrophe, he harks back to primordial tribes of hunters:

It was the antelope god who invited them into the thickets,
 calling: Submit to me now,
forager, that you may eat.
 This was no lying alone with a woman in sumptuous grasses,
 but a more murderous bliss,
calling for deadlier gifts.

From hunting we fell into agriculture, then witchcraft, then philosophy and "that nightmare, the self," with "the myth of identity," and now our deracinated country "continues its long, slow lapse into empire." Better we should return to "the rhythms of forests" and the antelope god and the rock-spirit.

What if the snow turns vivid as flesh in a frightening moment?
It is my life that it leads.
Pygmies have told me, Submit.

And out of such discursive verses Moore elegizes his dead: a great-great-grandfather who made wooden boot-pegs for the Austrian army, a grandmother who inhabits him, and a neighbor and the ghost of his bulldozed house. In "Wife" he describes an Egyptian Old Kingdom sculpture in black greywacke at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts: King Mycerinus, standing and gazing into "the mystical distance" with his "eyes calm, still untouched by our selfhood's terrible burden," beside Queen Kha-merer-nebty, with her "slender miraculous fingers" resting lightly on his arm and waist:

Each means earth to the other, the otherness that they can take in,
losing themselves in the dark
world, resurrected in them.
Isn't it here that our long lost race rediscovers its Garden,
enters the thicket at last,
puts down roots in the dirt?

In a prefatory note Moore explains, "These verse essays, lyrics and anecdotes, supposed to have been spoken in 1969, can be taken as a single poem whose germ is in modern anthropology." Moore submitted to an ancient meter, his antelope god, and blew on his wreathèd horn a creed not outworn yet.

What The Hell Are We Selling?

by

Joseph S. Salemi

One of my favorite films is *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, starring James Mason and Ava Gardner. The script is over-the-top romantic, with every cliché in the book: the dark and mysterious stranger, the beautiful and mercurial woman, a fantastic old legend, tangled intrigue, amatory rivalry, murder, and profound final tragedy. Everything is there, including the requisite quotation from the Rubaiyat. It's not an especially great film, but I've seen it more times than I can count, and at this point I probably know most of the dialogue cold.

I love the film because above all, it is a work of intelligence and articulation. The story is set in a *recherché* and scholarly atmosphere; everyone except the foreigners speaks perfect English; the camera work is clear and unconfusing and sane; and one actually has to think coherently on a religious-metaphysical issue in order to follow the action. When was the last time you saw the constellation of those qualities in the cinematic garbage being churned out today?

In any case, a few years ago I had the chance to see *Pandora* on screen, in a theater. An art house in Manhattan was advertising it as part of a retrospective of films from the postwar period. Since up to then I had only seen the film on television or videotape, I jumped at the opportunity.

I went and saw the film. It did not disappoint; in fact it was an even more compelling and moving experience to see the film as it was meant to be shown: on a large screen in a movie theater. I was delighted. "Thank God for films like this," I thought to myself.

As I exited the theater, I could not help overhearing the conversations of other viewers. One young woman with a nasal Bronx honk

spoke loudly to her companions and said “My Gawd, dat wuz nuttin’ but *talk* and *thought!* Dey cudda cut an hour outta awl dat dialogue! Didn’t duh director know dat movies are awl about VIZZ-uals?”

Those are the kind of ignorant cattle who constitute the filmgoing audience of today. Intelligence, articulation, excellent English, coherent thought—all these have to take a back seat to VIZZ-uals. An audience stuck in arrested adolescent development can’t handle intellectual dialogue, scholarly atmosphere, and scenes that last longer than five seconds. The fact that most movies today are deliberately made to appeal to teenage dorks doesn’t help matters.

I’d like to tell you that the audience for poetry today is different—that we are still an exclusive and discerning enough club to maintain the high standards of aesthetic appreciation. But I’m certain you know that I can’t. Democracy and mass entertainment have ruined poetry just as thoroughly as they have wrecked film.

This wouldn’t be important if we simply recognized that worthwhile poetry (as opposed to workshop excretions) has become a boutique art, with the same limited appeal as cameo-carving or Belgian lacemaking. There’s nothing shameful about a development like that. It happened to the mezzotint and the engraving; it happened to fresco painting; it happened to stained glass; and it is happening right now to the opera and to chamber music. These arts have become (or are in the process of becoming) limited niche-market activities. It’s no big deal.

But Americans have a psychological problem with anything that *doesn’t sell*. The philistine national character revolts against the idea. Otherwise intelligent and thoughtful Americans are profoundly disturbed over the prospect of something being “caviar to the general,” as Hamlet puts it. Hence we get, in the poetry world, endless discussions about how to make our art “more popular,” or how to get more people “involved in poetry.” And poets will come up with various harebrained ideas for encouraging the local newspapers to publish poems, or getting poems recited on the radio, or having silly poetry “festivals” with music and dancing. Even our Poet Laureate is

now expected to be a hype-spouting flack who runs from gathering to gathering to pump helium into the gasbag of popular enthusiasm for the art. We have the utterly absurd thing called “National Poetry Month,” as if poetry were in the same category as the Dairy Farmers Association or the Autism Awareness Society. Shills like Bill Moyers and Garrison Keillor are hailed as harbingers of our salvation. Too many people in today’s poetry world are behaving like ad-exec’s with an unpromising account: they are desperate to think up ways to resuscitate a basically *passé* product.

It’s all part of an American sickness that unfortunately is becoming a worldwide pandemic: the pathology of buying, selling, and advertising. We’re turning the whole damned planet into a madhouse of crazed Amway dealers, all frantically pumping up sales and pipe-dreams of “success.” But that fact, while bad in itself, is separate from the glaring irony that underlies the entire phenomenon of this lust to make poetry popular again.

Take the push to get the local press to publish poetry on a regular basis. The naïve persons who are behind this effort will give you the argument that poetry was always included in American newspapers in the past, and they dredge up yellowed editions from 1895 or 1912 to prove it. Let’s restore the practice, they say.

Do I need to answer that when people back then read poetry in their daily newspaper, it wasn’t impenetrable crap by Gertrude Stein or John Ashbery? That it was eminently readable stuff by Whittier, Kipling, Longfellow, Holmes, Tennyson, and dozens of others writers who weren’t into gnostic mystification? If you want to start publishing verse in the newspapers again, go ahead—but don’t expect a general readership for the self-absorbed navel-gazing and experimentalism that passes for serious poetry these days. And to *soi-disant* “formalists” who think they’ll do better: you’d have to be what the Brits call barmy to believe your heterometric hybrid ghazal-ballad with a Joycean interior monologue about the nuances of your Oedipal complex will be anything that anyone wants to read at the breakfast table.

Get real. There isn't going to be a general market for anything infected with the assumptions and tics of modernism, except among academics and their grad-school groupies. Everyone else is bored stiff by it. No one reads *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* unless it is assigned to them in a class. No one stages Samuel Beckett, except to generate a tax loss. No one plows through Gertrude Stein, except as mental calisthenics following a stroke. This is stuff that *really* doesn't sell.

Moreover, one must distinguish between the audience for poetry in 1895, and the potential audience today. Back then, people who enjoyed poems in the newspapers were persons who had some education (after all, they could read), and who were passingly familiar with the traditional requirements of verse. There were certain things that they expected and wanted.

First and foremost, they wanted the regularity of meter that told them they were reading a poem. Second, since a poet is someone with pretensions to being a professional in the language arts, they expected good grammar and proper usage, with the usual exceptions made for a colloquial or low-class persona, or for consciously comic or ribald verse. Third, they expected some sort of inherently interesting subject matter, and a bit of excitement or humor—most likely in the form of a straightforward narrative, or sage advice, or honest sentiment, or satiric deflation, or rhetorical flourishes. Fourth, they expected the diction and syntax to be comprehensible, but on a level noticeably different from what they heard in everyday speech around them (with the abovementioned exceptions granted). Fifth, they didn't want anything too long—Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" or Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas" probably constituted the length-limit of the popular attention span. And sixth, they certainly did *not* want the ubiquitous "I" of the modern McPoem, with its boring self-reflexivity and angst.

I can just hear the sniggering condescension of the modernists out there, as they sip their herbal tea: Is that the kind of plebeian poetry we're supposed to write, Salemi? Joyce Kilmer's "Trees"? Kipling's "If"? Whittier's "Barbara Frietchie"? Henley's "Invictus"?

To which I answer: *I don't give a swiving hump what you write in your little incestuous workshop worlds. You can write odes to your ovaries as far as I'm concerned. I'm simply telling you what intelligent people wanted from poetry for thousands of years, before you jerks took over. And it is the height of self-absorbed hubris for you to sound off now about the need to popularize poetry, when your modernist theory and praxis killed whatever popularity it once had.*

But what about the potential audience of today? Here we face an insuperable problem that is partially the fault of modernist hegemony, and partially the fault of social forces much larger than poetry. Let's consider both aspects.

Precisely because of nearly a century of free-verse emoting and obfuscation, the general public now immediately associates "poetry" with vague and gaseous formlessness, the primary purpose of which is to express the poet's personal feelings. The public no longer expects clarity, or sharpness of perception. They don't expect meter, or even skill in language. They expect the imprecise burble of inchoate emotion that you get when a drunk proposes a toast at a party. And they have come to accept this as normal and proper. They even value it as a useful safety valve for turbulent feelings, on par with spouting off in a group therapy session, or singing karaoke. That's the major problem—the expectations that the general public had for poetry in 1895 have vanished. And it's going to be very hard to re-create them.

Secondly, the potential renaissance of a perceptive audience is aborted by the general collapse of education in the humanities. This collapse has been caused by many factors, but the primary ones are the continuing stranglehold that Deweyite ideology has on educators, and the tendency of too many teachers to think of education as a vehicle for sociopolitical change rather than a pathway to the mastery of material. As a result, persons who appreciate good poetry today are usually the result of a happy accident: a parent who loved verse and passed that love on to his offspring; a rare non-Deweyite teacher who bucked the system; a bookish personality that produced a voracious reader; an aptitude for languages—whatever it may have been, it

connected these scattered people to the poetic tradition in a way that is never going to happen in mainstream education. Face facts: as long as the management of higher education, the credentialing apparatus, and the tenure, promotion, and hiring of teachers remain in the hands of countercultural left-liberal ideologues, a serious appreciation of our literary tradition will be sabotaged by the very persons who are left in charge of it. The English Department is now enemy-held territory.

It is for these reasons that any imagined revival of poetry is problematic at best. We can revive the steam engine if we want to, because we know how it works. We can revive a dead language like Hebrew, because we have its grammar and vocabulary. We can revive a dying river, because we know what's polluting it. But poetry? There is simply no agreement as to what poetry is, or what it is expected to do, or what is ailing it.

So, to all who are desperately trying to make poetry popular again, I direct this question: *What the hell are we selling?* Is it the good stuff, or is it the McPoems? If the latter, forget it—there's only a limited demand for garbage. If the former, well... you have more or less driven that market to extinction. Perhaps our best bet is to keep the dying embers alive, and hope that another century can fan them to flame again. Because out there, all they seem to want is VIZZ-uals.

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Translated Writers

Alexander Blok (1880-1921)

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)

Louis Gabriel Ambroise, Vicomte de Bonald (1754-1840)

Marcus Valerius Martialis (c. 40-102)

Leopold Staff (1878-1957)

Georg Trakl (1887-1914)

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.