

# TRINACRIA

*Poems, Translations, Essays, Reviews*



Issue No. 11

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# 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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## A Trental for the Martyrs of Otranto:

### St. Antonio Primaldo and His Companions

This issue of TRINACRIA is dedicated to the memory of the Holy Martyrs of Otranto, 813 Catholics savagely murdered on August 14, 1480 by Moslem Ottoman invaders, after refusing to apostasize to the false and pernicious religion of the pseudo-prophet and sower of discord, Mohammed.

Canonized May 12, 2013, and recognized as members of the Communion of Saints in the Church Triumphant.



*Sodalitas Christifidelium Hydrunti,  
orate pro nobis!*



## FAME AND FATUITY

It has always puzzled me when people assert that poetry is a thankless occupation with no rewards. I suppose one might agree if the question were one of tangible recompense or fame. Very few poets (even the highly accomplished) manage to achieve that sort of recognition. But despite the paucity of material payoffs, real poets continue to write out of an internal compulsion. There is no high on earth comparable to the satisfaction that comes when one has completed an absolutely perfect poem. Coke-heads do lines of fine white powder; poets do lines of meticulously crafted and interlocked feet.

That is why genuine poets, while not indifferent to rewards or recognition, are going to keep cranking out verse come hell or high water. It's simply too pleasant to stop. A similar situation obtains in the world of scholarship. A dedicated scholar doesn't carry on with his research and compose his articles because of some stupid "publish-or-perish" mandate. Only mediocre junior professors looking for a meal ticket do that. True scholars will study and write no matter what some goddamned Tenure Committee decides.

I knew a silly woman, a postgrad student working on a Ph.D. at the C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center in New York City. She was aggressive, pushy, and as charged up as the Energizer Bunny. She said to me "If I don't land a full-time tenure-track job, I'll never write a line more of scholarly commentary. I'll just get a job with some big corporation!" I didn't like her to begin with, but this effusion truly sickened me—here was a person who looked upon scholarship as nothing but a means to an end, the way a hit-man looks upon murder. She went on to have an academic career in race-class-gender studies, the usual catch-basin for on-the-make pseudo-scholars.

Do we have pseudo-poets who are parallel to such persons? We sure do. There are idiots who tell you “I want to make it big! I want to be lionized and idolized and anthologized!” But as to the actual quality of their verse, they are basically indifferent. They don’t really care. As long as they become celebrities in the po-biz world, nothing else matters. And if fame involves sucking up to people, networking, joining workshops, giving readings, hosting poetry gatherings, attending conferences, and pulling strings to get reviewed, they’ll do such things without the slightest hesitation. To paraphrase Robert Beum, stuff like that can sometimes make a Name, but it can never make a Great Poet.

William Saroyan (or someone very like him) once wrote a short story called “The Milk Pitcher,” about a youth who managed to be successful, happy, lucky, and well-adjusted in everything he undertook, whether it involved school or sports or personal relations. The story is utterly insufferable in its mindless celebration of the American bourgeois ideal of smiling, conformist success. And yet I am reminded of it whenever a poet tells me how desperate he is to “hit the big time.” I ask the poet if he is similarly desperate to produce top-notch poetry. The answer is typically “Oh sure, that too... but what’s the point of writing a great poem if you don’t become famous?” I consider such pseudo-poets to be the literary version of candidates on competitive reality-TV shows like “Survivor” or “The Apprentice.” They are little nerds pining for their Warholian fifteen minutes of fame.

Thank God we still have some poets whose main concern is the production of quality work. Here, in alphabetical order, are six of them from Issue # 10 who have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize:

- Norman Ball for his “Poisonous Relations,” a series of tight iambic pentameter quatrains on domestic tensions and a subsequent murder.
- Jane Blanchard for her “Restraint,” a narrative sonnet written in alexandrines, dealing with one of the hazards of poetry readings.

- Frank De Canio for his “Mighty Aphrodite,” a delightful set of iambic tetrameters on the goddess of sex as a boxer, with whom the speaker exchanges punches.
- James B. Nicola for his “April,” a cameo-like portrait of a young girl pining for her absent love, with a punning conclusion.
- Chris O’Carroll for his “In-and-Out Dry,” two perfectly constructed twelve-line stanzas on the proper mixing of a dry martini, with an utterly unexpected rhyme.
- Athar C. Pavis for her “It’s Only in the Morning,” a particularly delicate sonnet on the remembrance of someone lost but momentarily recaptured in the haze of morning sleep.

Whether or not these poets achieve a factitious “fame” is beyond my ken or concern. They have produced competent and pleasing work, and that is all that really matters in the long run. Even if such poems do no more than sit archived on a dusty library shelf, they are still quality material. Someone—sometime, somewhere—will read them with pleasure and appreciation. Unborn, unknown readers will smile with satisfaction and say to themselves “These are fine specimens of limpid, lucid, coherent English poetry.” If this prospect is not enough for anyone as a poet, he should find another line of work.

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Jared Carter

## Awakening

Not sleep at all, that from our eyes  
we brush away  
In those first moments, nor surprise  
the night's array

Of dreams has vanished with the dawn.  
Rather, the sense  
That something not quite touched is gone.  
Intelligence

Most rare still lingers in the glass—  
that strange demeanor,  
These flowers momentarily passed  
by some dark gleaner.

Barbara Daniels

## September Equinox

A temporary truce when day and night  
lay down their hours of equal black and white  
    in autumn armistice,  
a balance in the skies: darkness and light  
are poised in friendliness as if they might  
    suspend themselves like this.

But peace is always somewhat hit-and-miss,  
there's no eternal hug or endless kiss.

    Too soon the waiting shade,  
held for a moment in paralysis,  
will make a move. No human artifice  
    can make it feint or fade.

Winter must win and march its chill parade  
of leafless, figured trees and ponds inlaid  
    by frost. But now the sight  
of dew not ice on every resting blade  
sheathed in the lawn (and midges unafraid)  
    postpones the flight-or-fight.

Claudia Gary

## Three Epigrams

### *Victimhood*

When blizzard, quake, economy  
attack and show no lenience,  
what does the future want of me?  
It's such an inconvenience.

### *A Surprise Party*

Everyone turns out for it,  
everyone but you.  
You never know who might attend.  
No, you never do.  
They may not know each other,  
but ah, they all knew you.

### *Harvest Time*

Hollywood has taught us well:  
Why bother writing what won't sell?  
Take poetry—yes, take it, please!  
An orchard of indignities  
surrounds us. Water them, you brute,  
and send off the low-hanging fruit.

Lewis Turco

## Body Part

*for Jean*

I offer you the same old gift again:  
This ancient shriveled organ of my flesh  
That we have used since who remembers when?

It's shoddy now, but it was strong and fresh  
When we were young. You held it in your hand  
And felt its pulse when we had seed to thresh.

It throbbed for you and needed no command  
To flame and ache when it was called upon  
To do its duty, dilate and expand

To fill the evening or the breaking dawn,  
The morn or afternoon with the lover's art...  
So many years have passed now and have gone

To seed, so many organs have come apart—  
Still, I offer you this same old heart.

Sally Cook

## Disconnect

Sometimes the phone rings in the night;  
You answer it—there's no one there.  
Imagination's wings take flight—  
The sweep of *what-might-be* can bare  
A lifetime's failures, loves, retreats;  
Impulses from beyond. A spate  
Of stilted calls from louts and cheats,  
Apologizing much too late,  
Then phonies and poseurs across  
The ether place their awful calls  
Without regard for pain or loss.  
With every deadening voice that falls  
You long for other voices through  
Connections you can't make again.  
A disconnect is mocking you,  
Because of choices you made then.

Angelique Wellish

## Marriage Counseling

Wives, to handle husbands well,  
Pay heed to what I have to tell.  
You won't get far if you allow  
Your feelings to provoke a row.  
Remember that a man's fixed notions  
Won't be changed by your emotions.  
Entreaties, tears, and whining scenes  
Don't move men, unless they're queens  
Or dolled-up little prancing nancies  
Tricked out for a faggot's fancies.  
Men hate drama, and won't buy it—  
So don't you even dare to try it.  
Want to get your way with him?  
Let him hanker for your quim.  
I guarantee you'll make more hits  
With fish-net hose and perfumed tits.  
Make sure that his pocket rocket  
Is desperate to be in your socket.  
Let him wait until you're ready  
And watch his lust grow strong and steady  
Until it's likely to explode—  
His sales resistance will erode.  
Present him *then* with your request  
Before you're unzipped and undressed,  
And only let him plumb *le trou*  
When he's said "Yes, of course!" to you.  
Believe me, that's the way to go  
For ladies who are in the know.

Norman Ball

## Beyond Nine-Tenths Possession

*Cases of perfect possession are hopeless. There is no deliverance from them.*

—Father Malachi Martin, S.J.

The perfectly possessed are fine, awash  
in evil. Priest? No thank you. How inane—  
that swivel-headed, cinematic tosh  
made *de rigueur* by Regan's cheeky game  
of guacamoling Jesuits. What sets  
the blissful damned apart's their abject depth  
of self-concern. One prays for what one gets.  
Full-steeped within the world's fair length and breadth,  
the worldly form a godforsaken crew  
quite comfortably. There's no great gnash of teeth  
as souls that do not twist tend not to sue  
for peace until they're six feet underneath.  
No cross disturbs the superficial grin  
whose blithe irresolution buries sin.



Marly Youmans

## The Nuba Christians

Because of war, we lost our garden earth,  
And afterwards the goats were eaten up  
By the soldiers. We had cattle, chickens,  
A plot with beans and pumpkins by the house.  
In the hills grew sorghum, peanuts, millet...  
I used to walk there, singing in the sun,  
A tail of little children at my back.  
Now we rove, being few and destitute,  
In desert lands or hills or caves of earth.

Take a handsome young man, lithe and muscled,  
Take a young girl, bright beads around her neck,  
And braids that make her hair an ornament:  
Where can they wander and be welcomed home?  
When will the world be worthy of their feet?

Mary Kipps

## Tarot Reading

Nine cards arranged in a Triadic spread—  
what was, what is, and what will be, revealed.  
My past, convincingly well-drawn, as too  
the Moon, the shadow side of dreams which led  
me here before my destiny is sealed;  
the Lovers, us; and you, my Magic Man.

Although I pray the future is not true,  
suspicion's seed by tarot has been fed.  
Arriving home, I find the one who wields  
the Three of Swords that cleaves my heart in two,  
and tests my Strength against the cosmic plan  
that's turned my closest friend a courtesan,  
and you an Alchemist, your lips pressed hard  
to hers, Destroyer of our house of cards.

Tom Riley

## Helios, Helios!

*Et hora nona exclamavit Iesus voce magna dicens Heloi,  
Heloi, lama sabacthani...*

—Mark 15:34

It was dark—and he called upon the Sun.  
At least, that's how we understood his cry.  
As the gods go, the Sun's a mighty one  
To call upon. His fierce and fiery eye  
Sees through the mists and shadows that we try  
To hide our vile and shameful thoughts behind.  
Only a brave man lets the Sun's name fly  
When dying is the task he's been assigned.  
We bless you, Jew, although you've been defined  
To us as rabble-rouser, sorcerer,  
And madman. Though triumphant Death has dined  
On you, we pray the Sun at last will stir  
On your behalf—because you called his name.  
May the Sun raise you up—and spread your fame.

Leo Yankevich

## On the Beheading of Lee Rigby

It's true: few deaths are kind.  
The aged pensioner,  
with Dunkirk on his mind,  
prays for his to occur.

His life was long and hard;  
a belt still burns his back.  
Inside the cancer ward  
he lies upon the rack.

To die at ninety-five  
is not a tragedy.  
To part a hornet's hive  
is to die peacefully.

To be killed in one's prime,  
run over in the street,  
is an unspeakable crime  
no one should ever meet.

In Britain's largest city  
A soldier returning to base,  
young fusilier Lee Rigby,  
was slain because of race.

In the name of belief  
because Albion fights  
its Wars for Tel Aviv  
to uphold human rights?

Whose? Certainly not Lee's  
who lay upon the pavement  
that every white man sees.  
There freedom means enslavement.

Don Thackrey

## Whispering in Her Ear

Deep in you lies some remorse  
That you cannot, my sweet, endorse  
My burning yen for intercourse  
And let me spend my banked-up force  
Deep in you.

You've nayed me till your throat is hoarse—  
Now let the lower throat enforce,  
With logic from its speechless source,  
Your need for something large and coarse  
Deep in you.

## An Outdoors Girl

She says coitus under trees is good  
Where she can be at least assured of wood.

## Environmental Hazard

She saunters by with mobile hips performing...  
Good Lord, the fuel she adds to global warming!

# Hands to Work and Hearts to God: Quietism's Indiana Pupil

by

Norman Ball

Review of: Jared Carter, *The Darkened Rooms of Summer*  
Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014  
ISBN 978-0-8032-4857-1

In Jared Carter's latest collection of poetry, the poem "Picking Stone" is prefaced with the following passage from Emerson's *Self-Reliance*:

*Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost... we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.*

Carter's poetry speaks the latent convictions of the earth with unwavering courage. Latent conviction is obliquely paradoxical, as is a room darkened by summer, or the "dark shining" and "harsh glare billowing darkness" that Carter mentions in two poems. The grand ineluctable cycles that move across the earth, and no less through Carter's poetry, extinguish their ends in their beginnings. Everywhere, light appears out of darkness, or does the one interpenetrate the other? Stones are regurgitated to the earth's surface like bundled mysteries. Were they there last planting season? Each encroaches upon or draws one from the other, as if through great hidden sieves. There are no grand entrances, no sweeping bows, "...only the broken heave of light and dark," as Carter says in the poem "Phoenix."

This is a sprawling collection, nearly two hundred pages in length, that assembles poems from Carter's first five books. There is no way to do the volume anywhere near full justice, but I can touch upon those things towards which my fascination seems to gravitate.

Carter is a contemplative poet, but in the spirit of Wordsworth's wise passiveness. This contemplative state is metaphorically expressed in "Mississinewa Reservoir at Winter Pool." Here there are townspeople who

*as though  
having risen from a deep sleep  
... come at last to a place  
no longer having anything in it  
except themselves.*

To be sure, this sort of quietism has fallen on hard times. No poet today wants to take a silent bullet and leave the lectern. The goal now is to ascend the stage for an ill-suited ovation. In "The Oddfellows' Waiting Room at Glencove Cemetery," Carter begs to differ. A resolute listener, he continues to hold the thin, quiet line:

*There must always be a place like this  
where the dimensions collapse inwardly  
like a telescope you slip into your pocket.*

This is a beautiful image echoing the Emerson quote: a telescope, tasked with mapping the outer reaches of the universe, collapses inward, to a place where the poet stands waiting.

A quasi-heretical notion at the best of times, quietism was formally condemned as such by Pope Innocent XI in 1687. The contemplative Trappist monk Thomas Merton referred to it as an inert spiritual vacuum. Protestantism and its work ethic were equally hostile to an idea that rejected faith's role as a catalyst for striving, struggling, and capital formation. The fundamental objection to quietism was that a



faith lacking vigor and purpose in the world risked falling into listlessness and solipsism. And sure enough, in time God's voice would be shouted down by the clatter of railroads and later by the ubiquitous presence of hand-held devices.

There's even less escaping the verbal noise of today. Poems arrive hyperlinked to position papers. Recently, poetry critic Ron Silliman accused quietism (or as poetasters like to call it, The School of Quietude) of a sly tactical reticence aimed at "denial of self-identification" and a refusal to be named. Poets today are expected to look for a good fight. Wearing their schools on their sleeves, they hoist up grievances with the best of our politicians.

The people in Carter's world are forever lifting bricks and stones, digging up roots, and burying the dead, but not with the isolated despair of Sisyphus. Here is a passage from "Ginseng":

*But all of them together—hunters,  
thieves, those who keep the old ways—  
pass it from hand to hand along  
a chain of those who know exactly  
where it is going, what it's worth—*

Mississinewa County rejects undue self-absorption, the wages of which are supreme existential torment. Carter's people accept their subordinate role as momentary caretakers of the land—from prior hands, into future hands. To paraphrase Frost, life is notable mostly for going on, albeit with a flitting cast of characters, which is another way of saying time has a way of standing still. Carter writes:

*Nothing done well ever ends,  
she said, touching my hand, not even land  
built up one act at a time, so that all  
that went before, and after, still waits  
there.*

We lift our stones at our appointed times, then drop them for the earth to reclaim, swallow, and vomit up anew so that they can be found and

lifted again. This human bucket brigade forms a cosmic circle. Coleridge's tail-eating serpent meets Eliot's still point in "Mourning Dove" where "all of their singing is circular, and comes back to the same stillness." In "The Undertaker," we find a similar acquiescence to a cycle larger than one generation's labors:

*Each man slowly recognized, like a combination of lost numbers,  
that men younger than themselves had labored here,  
grown old, and were gone, who had lifted this same earth,  
who had put in what they now took out...*

As for *this* moment, for you and me, the mind is a stone to be rolled away from the entrance of the soul so that man and earth may enjoy unmediated communion. At times even the dead must be lifted in order to deliver their stillness to higher ground. Frankly, no one is surprised at how few in the congregation are up to the task, as the undertaker soon learns:

*Fell overcome with heat, one did, the first day;  
another struck by the sun; two more threw down their tools  
and walked away. The few who stayed till the job was done  
rode together in the back of Sepe's pickup each quitting time  
to a tavern on the highway...*

Carter's quietude is an act of will, hardly a feeble acquiescence. He resists polluting the stillness with gratuitous detail, and instead resigns himself with poetic fatalism to Keats's negative capabilities; the "part of your mind that cannot hurry, that has never learned to decide." Forbearance is the bright shadow that stalks Carter's pen.

Carter advertises himself only on the rarest occasions. In "At the Sign-Painters," he extols the Depression-era sign painters who stoically accept being observed at their labors. We can sense the poet's vocation slowly forming in a boy's mind. The words are prefigured, waiting to be filled out with whispers. But there are no speeches. The universe entrusts its signs to the artisan who stands, in ready quietude, brush in hand:

*For the slow sweep and whisper  
of the brush—like seeing the ghost letters in pencil  
gradually filling out, fresh and wet and gleaming, words  
forming out of all that darkness, that huge disorder.*

Contemplatives are particularly maddening because they refuse textual interpretation from any higher authorities, whether clergymen or self-appointed poetry critics. At least meditation involves meditating *upon something*: a papal bull, the new Tom Cruise movie, a political manifesto. The arrangers of this world seek indoctrinated readers, not divine listeners. In the absence of doctrinaires, their sway of earthly power is loosened. French Quietist Jeanne Marie Guyon called it “loosening the stays.” Carter in his poem “The Shrivings” says “Things got in the way of what he saw and heard.”

Carter’s sensibilities are shaped by the Shaker heritage of his Indiana home, and Mother Ann Lee even appears in one of his poems. One feels, in Carter’s poetry, Mother Ann Lee’s retirement from opinion and argument into the unitive state of divine contemplation. When the nervous chatter stops, a clearing is made and the universe bursts forth. While nature can be chronicled for the labors she performs beneath our feet, we are here not to move mountains but to occasionally move our dead to higher ground. The mind feels nothing. Carter’s poems cannot be willed into existence. Rather, they find him at his workbench, busy with craft and unconcerned with polemic.

I note that Carter’s latest work favors compression, but I prefer the unhurried eccentricity that characterizes his earlier work. In the main, this poetry moves across the earth with understated majesty. The ultimate testament to craft is the poet’s absence, and certainly his reticence. In Carter’s case, we can be thankful that we have a poet who keeps to darkened rooms, and who knows how to leave well enough alone.

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Rubén Darío (1867 – 1916)  
Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 B.C. – 8 B.C.)  
Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic (1871 – 1951)  
Charles Maurras (1868 – 1951)  
Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 – 1926)

# 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.*

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