

NORTHAMPTON POETRY REVIEW



ISSUE 1 : SUMMER 2017



POETRY - FICTION - REVIEWS



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Northampton Poetry Review
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About Northampton Poetry Review

The Northampton Poetry Review is a new online literary journal based in Northamptonshire, UK. Its mission is to give voice to new poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

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Editorial | Welcome

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Northampton Poetry Review, a new literary journal from Northampton that will showcase new writing, poetry and fiction.

It was a day long ago that I first discussed the idea of producing a literary magazine for Northampton, sat with a poet friend of mine in a pub in Northampton, we drank and watched the rain fall and discussed the idea of launching something akin to the New Yorker or the Paris Review... except for Northampton. It's a rare pleasure then to bring alive that piece of drunk talk, if in slightly more modest form.

A brief word on Northampton. A motivation back then was to create a home for the high number of poets we knew living in the Northampton area. At the time I wondered if it was something specific to the region; while the town is not much, it has some curious history and the surrounding countryside's mix of flat ground and tall sky gives a person space to think. Much like our patron saint, life long Northamptonian and chief ruminator, John Clare who spent his days rambling the fields, writing his poems and pondering on the pleasures and pains of life.

What I've since come to recognise however is that poetry is a global affliction. Poets are everywhere. They're often hiding in our midst. They're in the cafés, the banks, the phone shops. They're cutting our hair, driving our taxis and mending our shoes, just as John Clare was someone's pot-washer and a farm hand.

For many poetry is their real vocation. They write it in bed at night or first thing in the morning. They write it in notebooks on the bus or in their

head as they wait in line for coffee.

While the NPR starts with Northampton it hopes to be a home for everyman poets everywhere. This first issue features an eclectic array of voices; including two clinical psychologists, a marathon runner, a Green Party Candidate and a retired Norwegian merchant seaman amongst many others.

I consider it comforting in these peculiar, dark and conflicted times that there are poets out there finding their way and chronicling the times as an alternative news media. As the American poet Allen Ginsberg once said, *“The only thing that can save the world is the reclaiming of the awareness of the world. That’s what poetry does.”*

With this in mind I want to thank the the effort of all the contributors and invite you to enjoy our first offering.

Tom Harding

Editor, Northampton Poetry Review

p.s.

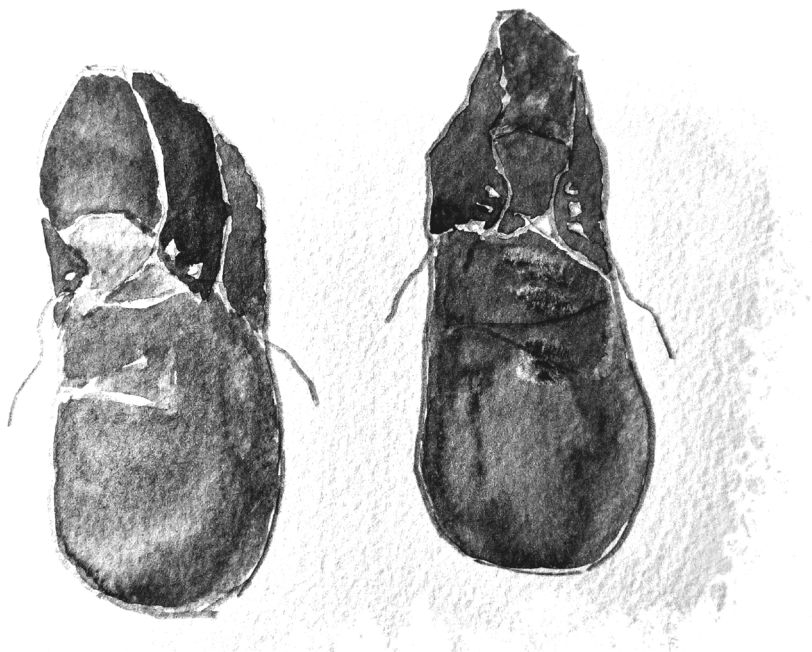
You’ll notice the theme for the first issue is shoes. Why shoes? Northampton was put on its feet by shoe production. Its heritage of shoe manufacturing spans nearly 900 years. The majority of the 70 million pairs of boots worn in World War I came from Northampton. These days the town exports over £20 million worth of shoes to Japan alone. Here though we’re talking shoes more broadly... looking at both the sole and the soul of them.



"I felt so weak here that I was forced to sit on the ground to rest myself, and while I sat here a coach that seemed heavily laden came rattling up, and splashing the mud in my face wakened me from a doze. When I had knocked the gravel out of my shoes I started again. There was little to notice, for the road very often looked as stupid as myself. I was often half asleep as I went on."

From John Clare's walk, 1841

ISSUE 1: SHOES



Paul Waring

NOT QUITE 8 1/2

It was one of my Fellini dreams.
I'm Guido or somebody,
Running red lights. Cool cats
In cuban heels stand kicking
Sand into the eyes of night.

Someone's on a promise
In a wrong-side-of-town
Film noir hotel. A Latin band
Strikes up the rush hour
And we cha-cha-chá. The floor
Sweeps forward-back-side-
To-side and hips twist
Until my mis-timed rock step
Onto your peeping toe.

And you scream
And notice my two left feet
And my plastic 8½ slip-ons
And the game is up.



Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

80

My old spirit has its boots on
They are thick with mud

The mud is heavy with clay
from the ditch on my farm
where the red-winged blackbirds hide

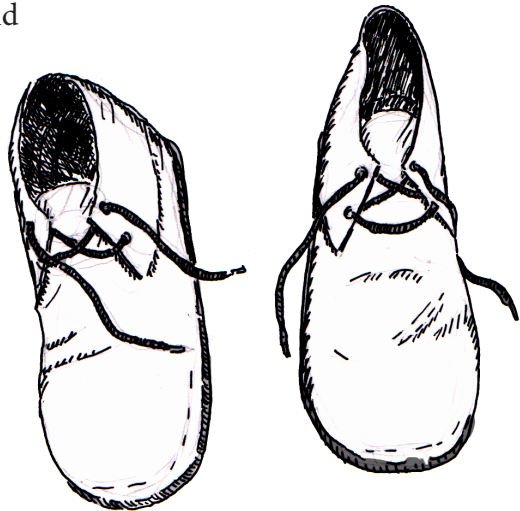
Each boot must weigh twenty pounds
They're like the cement shoes
of Mafia lore

My poor spirit,
so encumbered with
mud
and years,
age as heavy as wet clay—
how I would love to be barefoot again!

Tim Gadhorn

YOUR SHOES

Little open mouths,
worn out tongues, dirty talkers,
they've been passing comment
when you're not around,
how you've been
going this way and that,
scuffing them on street corners,
shuffling through the
warm streets at night
listening to voices from open windows.
Look how worn they've become
these imprints of your time on earth
tired as old leather
like your bruised heart
made soft on a thousand defeats,
it's won them a certain authenticity
that right now says you could
walk this road forever.



James Croal Jackson

BY THE DOOR

Your mud. Here,
we count days.
We walked Santa Monica
to the ocean. There, we removed
our shoes. Held them
by spines to dip
our feet. I love where
we have been. The more we walk,
the less we know. Either way it ends
yet the water takes
and takes, and here
we wait.

Sally Spedding

DAISY CHAIN SHOES

come wrapped in pink tissue, their coffin boxes which are of course recyclable, say Shoes for Life - size 3 and up for girls to walk free.

Stand out from the crowd.

But beneath each rubber sole lies the fate of those who'll make the wrong choices. Follow their hearts not their heads.

Interred in resin, two tiny dolls plead release. But Shoes for Life means just that, till the rubber thins and the soles wear out.

And the sins?

Ask the walled-up nun in Borley Church and the Burgedin lover bricked up in a Lock-keeper's cottage who'd walked too free, followed hearts too far. Stood out too boldly from the crowd...

B. Clavery

THE SECRET

I asked her whether
it was the mind
or the body
or as some say might say
the money
but she said,
leaning in real close,
the truth to it all was shoes,
that's right,
it's all about the shoes.
No you didn't know it
but you were written
out of her story
before you finished
walking in.



Jan Oskar Hansen

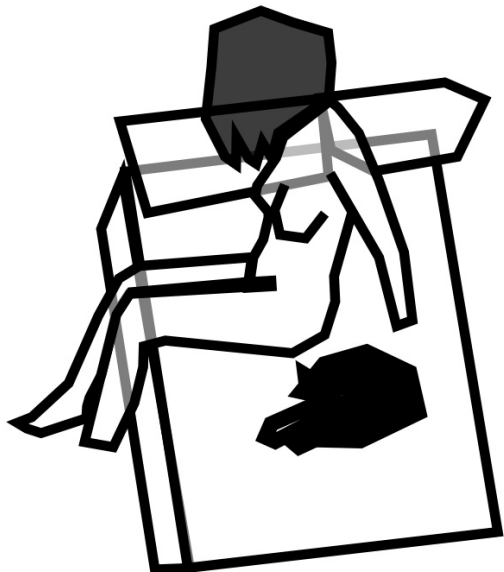
FOOTSTEPS TO RUIN

This spring makes my heart beat faster
went for a walk saw a verdant field sprinkled
with xanthous flowers nodding
in the mild zephyr
I must take a photo.
Walked onto the field to find the prettiest ones
looked behind me, my heavy boots
had ruined lesser beauties.

William Wilson

PAXOS POEM

Cooling
sunburn under a white moon
and almond trees
drunk on tsipouro nursing
blisters from
these new shoes-
the stray dog and I
eaten by mosquitos
at midnight-
please we're not dead yet.



R. Gerry Fabian

STORE BOUGHT SHOES

My great grandfather
was as poor as Texas prairie soil
in the middle of a drought.
He could not read or write
but someone taught him his cyphers
and he could do in his head
what most people needed
a pencil and tablet to accomplish.

At the age of ten,
his father gave him a bow
and three arrows
along with the admonishment,
“you should only ever need one arrow.”
His job was to provide
meat and fish for the family.

He never knew there were three meals
until his early twenties.
Before that, when he got up each day
there were biscuits and gravy
in the morning,
and biscuits and gravy in the evening
along with whatever wildlife
he managed to catch.

His only desire in life
was to own a pair
of “new” store bought shoes.
His current pair -
black scuffed Oxfords
from the Goodwill store.

He lived in a log cabin
until the age of 89
and is buried next to the cabin
wearing black scuffed Oxfords.



Dominic James

FIRST IMPRESSION

An upper storey window. Cries,
shades thrown open, curfewed night:

light splashes on wet cobblestones
spills on a kitten, black and white,

in the post-war fog of Europe
she is a pretty sight, fawning on

the shoes of a man discovered
in the doorway, a shade himself

when he looks up, superior, smiling
in that certain way. Cats like him,

Harry Lime, black market dealer
killing anything but time.

Fit for the part, his clothes are grand,
impeccable and at his feet the camera

lingers, the kitten compliments the rogue.
The audience, in Forty Nine

start in guilty recognition, he wears
a brand new pair of English brogues.



Neil Elder

BOOT CLEANING

I'm jinking a knife between the studs of a boot
dislodging mud.

I tell myself there's pleasure in patience rewarded,
the slow reveal, a job complete.

My son has not yet learned this;
too young to wait, he leaves the dirty work to me.
When I look up I see my mother holding boots.

She smiles and winks,
nodding down to the ground,
where, spread before her,
is every shoe I ever wore,
polished, dubbed and gleaming.

Sydney Perera

SUMMER HAIKU

Summer girl in Tube,
Your pointed toes are lovely -
But spare my tired feet!



Rob Reeves

TO A SHOE

You ent never gunna wunna
Meet a shoe as good as me,
I've been passed down through generations,
From family to family.

See, I'm a Northants shoe, through and through,
Ket'rin' tanned and bound,
Skived in N-town, buffed in Rushden,
I'm a shoe that's been around.

I've been a roguish brogue,
A two-tone spat much sharper than any suit.
At one point during the Noughties,
I was a pair of Kinky Boots.

I've scaled the summit of Mount Everest,
I've marched soldiers out to war,
But it's not the places I've been that counts,
It's what I've done that matters more.

I gave this county much needed sole,
Not just something fancy for your feet,
I stitched together these communities
And I built these cobbled streets.

But you ent never gunna wunna
Meet a shoe as good as me,
I'll outlive every last clog and loafer,
Just you wait and see.

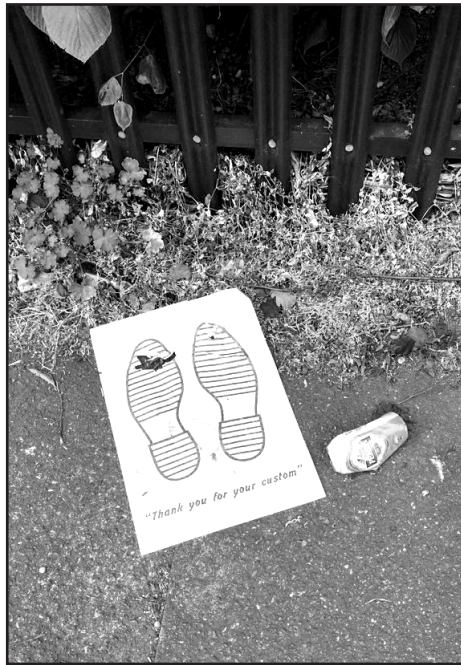
But sometimes my longevity
Leads outsiders to enquire
Why every shoe made in this Shire
Never quite seems to ever expire.

Well, I'll let you in to my little secret,
If you want the truth to be told:
I've had fourteen replacement uppers,
And sixteen replacement soles.

To a Shoe was a performance piece originally commissioned by BBC Local Radio
for National Poetry Day 2016.

Nicholas Laroombs

THE SHOES THAT CELEBRATE THEMSELVES



Given the hypothetical choice from a multitude of super powers I pick
the power of timing.

Good timing, that is.

The difference between zinging the perfect punchline and trying to pick
a lead balloon off the ground.

Because the timing I have is bad.

Regularly I find myself in the right place at the wrong time, stopped by
closed doors after hours.

Then I go and blunder about in the wrong place at the right time and get
a knife in my ribs.

The police have a file on me.

I have a friend who always knows when to leave parties.
To the second.
How I envy them.
It's taken many wasted hours and much misspent money for me to learn.
When they up and go, I follow.
There really is no point pretending otherwise.
What did I think I was going to gain from staying until the bitter end?
Certainly I didn't want to hang around for the dustpan and brush to
make an appearance.
What was I waiting for?
I was waiting for good times to come along in the form of a beautifully
determined person.
To change my life in their direction.
I knew they'd later tell their friends that it was really some bad timing on
their part.
But that was later. I'd enjoy those first three carefree months together.
Truth be told, I'm a coward.
Life scares me.
I need someone to hold me by the hand.
Would I have picked up the shoes without my sister prompting me?
Probably not.
They had caught my eye.
A pair of light tan brogues sat outside the Chinese supermarket beside
an empty fish tank.
It was the size of them that stopped me in my tracks.
I have big feet.
Two boiled hams at the end of my legs.
Don't bother searching charity shops, no one walks in my shoes.
Since the age of fourteen I've had to have them specially made by Anto-
nio.
One pair a year, I walk them into the ground.
The middle of June and a spare pair was bounty indeed.
I stopped and stared.
'They look about your size,' my sister said, echoing my thoughts.

Picking them up I measured the shoes against my feet.
They were each other's shadow.
'Do you think I can just take them?' I asked.
'They've been left out to throw away anyway. Might as well.'
Scooping them up by the hooks of my fingers I took them.
We were between pubs in the middle of a session.
For the rest of the day the shoes went where we went.
It's best not to wear out your welcome, so we didn't stay in the same pub
for more than two rounds.
The shoes sat on top of the table alongside our drinks.
We read the stitching. It was a good make.
'There's money in them,' my sister said.
At a certain stage I had to scold her for slopping a pint over the toe.
I didn't put them by my feet.
Knowing they would be forgotten down there.
When we said our goodbyes my sister said, 'I want to see a picture of those
things on.'
I told her I would.
When I woke up next morning I found them scattered by the bed like two
bread rolls left to rot.
My head was pounding so I made some coffee.
I felt filthy so I had a shower.
Only then did I really look at the shoes.
Shoes maketh the man.
What kind of man once wore these, I wondered.
A big footed fellow, for sure.
No hobbit, I expected him tall and wide of shoulder.
Not imposing, though.
Like the shoes, he would be broken in and comfortable.
The old rigid beliefs were the structure of the shoe that held him together.
But his leather was faded and wouldn't rub at the heel.
The kind of man I'm attracted to.
The kind of man that would have donated at the shoe bank.
For the first time I considered the owner might be dead.

I would be stepping into a pair of dead man's shoes.
They say you can't judge a man until you've walked a mile in his shoes.
Well I would walk 500 miles just to see my lover's new hairdo.
I had time enough to walk round the block.
Clear my head and maybe gain a different perspective on the previous owner.
I chose a pair of cotton socks and slipped myself inside.
When you wear the same pair of shoes every day you get used to the level of support and balance they provide.
When you've been getting your shoes from the same guy half your life you get used to the way your feet are set.
This was like sleeping between hotel sheets.
They hugged from the top and the side.
His old feet clamped down over mine.
The man in the iron shoes.
It occurred to me that they weren't left out by accident.
There had been purpose in their placement.
A drop spot.
They control drug mules in this fashion.
Fastening a pair of indestructible shoes to their feet.
Laces tongue tied like a lovesick teenager.
Filled up with drugs and remote controlled to the rendezvous.
At the mercy of Mr Big.
He who wields the power, wagging his joystick and poking the big red button.
Making the runner dance to his tune.
Guided blind through the city streets.
Marching to the beat of a different drum.
No respect for main roads.
Let a car plough them down, break every bone in their body.
The shoes will not release their iron grip.
Dragging the carcass behind like a parachute deployed.
My favourite muscle man is Derek Poundstone, but even he couldn't pull the poor sap from the predestined path.

Once the runner arrives safely at the destination, some sketchy looking
warehouse someplace, only then will the laces undo.
Like the locking mechanism on a rollercoaster ride.
The shoes will let go with a sigh.
Buyers beware.
No cavity left unthumbed.
If nothing is found they shoot the messenger dead.
Like, a lot. A totally unnecessary number of bullets.
The coroner is bored counting them.
Shipped back returned to sender.
I was in some trouble here.
Bad timing had struck once again.
I'd swiped shoes meant for someone else.
Why hadn't I checked above, noticing the pair of trainers tied at the laces
slung over the telephone wire? Nobody ever looks up.
Now they'd be gunning for me.
My only hope was the scenic route.
Prolonging my life by a couple of hours.
I had no drugs on me.
No way of scoring at such short notice.
I was a dead man.
Fated to die with my boots on.
Shoe gazing, I knew I should take a picture. Make it last longer.
Snapping one off and sending it to my sister.
I'd been lying on my back, shod feet resting against the wall.
I'd been lying in that position for a while.
Blood draining down my thighs, feet a little numb.
Using my hands I set both down upon the floor and flexed my toes.
They were comfortable in their new surroundings.
Trying them out in motion, I had an unsteady walk around.
The pressure points were different, altering my gait slightly.
I felt like a new person.
Good habits breed themselves.
Simple actions repeated rewire the brain, building a reflex.

The action comes first.
I'd been following my feet.
They'd been leading me up the garden path.
Whatever their cruel intentions these new old boots were made for walking.
So that's what I was going to do.
Fingers crossed my new way of walking led me astray.
Down the road less travelled.
Beautiful vistas awaited in an otherwise dull grey what's the point day.
Sure enough, it was raining.
A slate curtain drew itself around me.
Heads were down, umbrellas up.
The pavements bustling.
Walk with me.
I knew a shortcut through an open lot.
Took strides over gravel.
Felt every bit of grit in every fleshy fiber of my foot.
Heard a great clomp clomp about me as though I were Frankenstein's monster.
Look, I have low arches.
You might even say flat feet.
If war were to break out I wouldn't be the first to go.
Considering what I have to work with I like to think I do okay.
If you're going to have bad timing at least keep quiet about it.
Caught backtracking is mortifying.
Whereas these clodhoppers announced my arrival like a bell on a cow.
The car wash boys, put out of work by the rain, looked up from their buckets, squeezed their sponges, and watched me pass.
Eyes down, I wended my way through a side alley, past a film crew, making a beeline for the skate park.
Unconcerned by the rain the skate kids skated.
They made me feel old in my twenties.
I double-backed on myself, feeling the pinch in my toe.
Cowboy walking beyond the pet shop and carpet superstore.

My eyebrows were waterlogged.
Pelting raindrops used my nose as a water slide.
I was damp.
Picking up the pace, giving the new old shoes a run out.
On the last leg, splashing through puddles and avoiding umbrella spokes,
razor sharp tips twirling past at jugular level.
A ladder propped against a shopfront had to be dodged at speed.
Funnelling me into a manmade tunnel of scaffolding holding up the
bookies.
Under cover I slowed, no longer rained upon.
Nice not to be assaulted from on high, I thought.
WHEN! -
It happened as a memory in real time.
I watched the present as though it were already the past.
If someone calls, I never reply.
Once bitten, twice shy.
So the shouts overhead were ignored.
Until I felt the hairs on the back of my neck prickle.
And a loud crash split my mental state asunder.
Choosing neither flight nor fight, I stood rigid and played dead.
'Are you alright?'
Something was touching my instep.
I risked a turn and peak and looked and saw a ruptured toolbox spilling
its load on the pavement right beside me.
Its gleaming guts of spanners and wrenches.
The loaded weapon had missed me by an inch, if that.
I looked up to see three workmen looking down.
'Are you okay?' they repeated.
Nerves fired and muscles twitched, stretching out my thumb.
I said, 'Yes, thanks.'
Hurrying on out of the scaffolding enclosure.
Where the rain had eased and the light had changed.
Everything looked like an Instagram filter.
It dawned on me how close death had brushed by.

It had nearly killed me.

A second slower or a second later and my head would've been caved in.
I'd be lying on the ground, my blood draining down the gutter.

The fact I was alive was a minor miracle.

Or good timing.

A rainbow shone faintly over the flat above the insurance agency offering
sanctuary of home.

Where I went to take off my shoes, holding the power between my hands.
Noticing the outsole was completely stripped from the bottom.

Leaving the metallic welt exposed.

That's what had been clunking the ground with every step I took.

And no doubt why my socks were soggy.

The soles of my barking feet looked like two dead fish.

Useless in the rain, then.

And they echoed my footfalls like the first to die in an old fashioned horror
film.

Rather than remove me from the line of fire they had marched me into
the danger zone.

But for the shoes I wouldn't have been outside at all.

The damn things had nearly gotten me killed.

I felt their evil presence. They had to go.

A curse can be passed on, so I left the shoes outside, hoping someone
would liberate shoes and me both.

I didn't leave them outside the flat. I didn't want to advertise my own wanton
theft and bizarrely sized feet.

No, I left them on top of a recycling bin.

With a good view from the cafe across the street.

There I ate bubble mushed to ashes and drank three cups of sweet tea
waiting for someone to come along.

Come they did, eventually,

I couldn't see his feet, but he wasn't a tall man.

Perhaps he was a stuffer.

He had a pudgy pale potato face. Moving quickly with a slight forward tilt
to his body.

Dressed in suit and tie, with a hand held beside his chest to prevent the wind from getting in and flapping him about.

With frowning eyes he examined the shoes. Picked them up and seemed to sniff them.

Such close scrutiny, I thought he'd never take them, but he did.

And they were gone.

I felt no remorse. Rather you than me, fella.

Bill paid, I walked home slowly in my footsteps.

There was no one else in the flat when I returned, so I spread out best I could on the couch of luxury.

When I heard the key in the front door I scampered back to my room and shut myself inside.

Sat on my fold out bed, looked at the clothes rail, thinking about folding and putting away some of the clothes that lay where they were thrown.

Instead, I picked up and put down a few articles. Stretched out with headphones on.

I listened to music on shuffle until it was dark outside.

Then I hung a shirt over the window because I didn't have any curtains and watched Storage Hunters until I fell asleep.

Sunlight filtered through polyester woke me at ten minutes past an ungodly early hour.

I scraped myself together and got right back on it.

Had toast for breakfast.



“So I went on hopping with a crippled foot; for the gravel had got into my old shoes, one of which had now nearly lost the sole. Had I found the overseer’s house at hand, or the parson’s, I should have given my name, and begged for a shilling to carry me home; but I was forced to brush on penniless, and be thankful I had a leg to move on.”

From John Clare’s walk, 1841

FEATURED POET



Jan Oskar Hansen

PING PONG

There I was in Heaven
Playing a game of Ping Pong
When I got a call from God
“I have a job for you going
Down to earth
And be born again.”
I protested “last time I was
On earth
There was a war on
I was hit
By an arrow in my chest
It was painful.”
“You have to”, he said
“A newly born needs a soul
Before you know it you will
Be back up here again.”
Gave me a hug he did
I`m still waiting, I forgot
For God time is meaningless
As he dwells in the abstract.

Jan Oskar Hansen is this month's feature poet. Jan is a poet, story teller and seafarer, born in Stavanger, Norway. He joined the merchant navy at 15 and spent most of his life at sea until settling in the early 90's in Portugal. His poetry has been widely published in hard copy and online, worldwide. To find more about his poetry visit www.writeoutloud.net/profiles/janoskarhansen

MISGIVINGS

The long road is a petrified asphalt river where it dips and falls
into an abyss, it's boiling and steam arises, cars fall in
disappear, never to be seen again
I have warned them do not drive when the sun sets,
but headless they drive into their own oblivion.
Ancient sorrow, under the new lane, is a Roman road
soldiers, who had been promised eternal life, come to life when
the sun drips golden blood;
Heaven help a driver caught up in their rage his many regrets
are as useless as morning dew on wayside weeds.

VAGABOND

I found a sweet shop in the middle of nowhere,
bought a box of Swiss chocolate,
took my sack of hay given to me by a kind farmer
for a mattress.

I sleep on top of the kitchen table for fear of rats,
with only a horse blanket and hard oak.

The candy seller's daughter is
getting married to her own image,
a gilded mirror. Last night

I fell off the table dreamed I was back at sea
and the ship was pitching and rolling;
bet I gave the rats a fright.

I went to the wedding of the candy man's daughter,
it was a sweet affair, the priest had a sugar rush,
he cried when she tenderly kissed the looking glass.

A TRAVEL TO PALESTINE

In a landscape of chlorophyll sprinkled with yellow and red flowers, neglected olive trees and bushes, my motorbike broke down, my mobile was useless no signal here and I had a long walk home. If I only had a donkey I could continue to the hazy blue mountain that has always eluded me, moving away from me when sought. The beast and I could have reached the mountain, over and past it and ended up in Palestine, old people are respected there; mind some old men do not deserve accolade, like Henry Kissinger, a man of many sins, but I would flame the downtrodden with the fire of freedom, and not let them sink into the peace of slaves who have lost how to dream. I would then give my donkey to another old man and travel to Amman in Jordan and take a plane home, sit in my room and be glad that my life had not been futile, and listened with ease as shadows of assassins surround my home.

FURTHER POEMS



Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

WOMAN AND CHILDREN

The president is floundering
He's a man I despised
well before he became president
One time I watched his
reality TV show
He loved saying: You're fired
I recognized him as a bully and a sadist
and never imagined that
he could become the President of the United States

I attribute his election to the fact
that few Americans
(maybe few people anywhere)
know how to process their own suffering
how to keep it from overtaking them
and warping their judgments

I despised the president
before
and after
he assumed that office,
but now I'm working to be more
compassionate

cognizant of the fact
that we are all slaves to Ego
and prone to greed, hatred and delusion

I hope that my compassion will somehow
find its way to him
that he will feel it
like the slightest breeze

and that he'll restrain himself
from starting yet another war
in which the victims are mainly
women and children



POLAROID

Sydney Perera

SHARING JOYS

My joys are aching buds until I write
To you, and then the petals open slow;
And it is only when you write to share
Those joys I know the fragrance of the flower.

I cannot carry in my heart alone
The burden of the beauty of the world
As heavy as the foliage on the trees
These summer days in woodland and the parks.



William Wilson

HOW IT HAPPENS

The mind makes hay
in the slumber of a deep afternoon,
the tired old librarian traipsing
to the back to blow off the dust
from a thought long forgotten.

It was summer when you breezed
through the middle of my life,
like a ghost through a wall,
leaving with an urgency
of a thunderstorm that knocks
out the lights.

Tim Gadhorn

MIDSUMMER

There are moments when time takes a rest
like northern Europe at midsummer
when the night is indiscernible from the day
and so you sit outside at midnight
with loved ones and people you barely know,
eating wild strawberries and drinking wine
trying to conjure the spirits
of future lovers from the pine woods.
Imagine how drunk you'd be there
inhaling air off a mirrored lake,
your thoughts would become so clear
you might begin to think you were
a character from folklore.
Imagine the mischief you might get up to
with the sun refusing to lie down
Imagine the kisses you could steal on such a conceit
believing morning was never coming
to wipe the slate clean.
Imagine the lies you could tell yourself
If you thought this life
might run on forever.



“When I had told my story they clubbed together and threw me five-pence out of the cart. I picked it up, and called at a small public-house near the bridge, where I had two half pints of ale, and twopennyworth of bread and cheese. When I had done, I started quite refreshed; only my feet were more crippled than ever, and I could scarcely bear walk over the stones. Yet I was half ashamed to sit down in the street, and forced myself to keep on the move”

From John Clare's walk, 1841

FEATURES



Sue Harding

ON SHOES...

“I have had a strange obsession with shoes since I can remember. Not so much the way they look, but more how they sound. Which is lucky, as now I am a Foley Artist. The sound of a footstep is my trade. I buy them second hand. Already softened. My local charity shop allows me to audition them on the street outside. My favourites are heels on concrete or soft shoes on a gritty path. They need to have depth and warmth. As a child, I would pick shoes for their sound and change paths if the crunch on the other side was more pleasing. Even today I have been known to choose footwear appropriate to a locations surface. There are other sounds that catch my attention. Certain buttons and wheels. But shoes have always been special, each one sounding unique with their own particular voice.”



Sue Harding has been a freelance foley artist for the past 12 years working on such acclaimed feature films as *I*, *Daniel Blake*, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, *The Imitation Game*, *Les Misérables* and *In Bruges*; as well as numerous television shows ranging from *Peppa Pig* to *Poldark*. At the 66th Emmy Awards she won Outstanding Sound Editing for a Miniseries for *Sherlock*.

Sue was also the subject of the documentary film *The Secret World of Foley*.

Follow Sue on twitter: [@suehardingfoley](https://twitter.com/suehardingfoley)

Visit Sue's instagram collection: Shoes In Books ([@shoesinbooks](https://www.instagram.com/shoesinbooks))

Another Side of John Clare

I AM JOHN CLARE - THEATRE REVIEW

Sunday 11th June
Earls Barton Literary Festival

A review of a new play by Stephen Loveless about the Northamptonshire poet John Clare, played by Robin Hillman in a solo performance.

On the night of the 8th March 1860 John Clare wrote the following response letter to a well wisher,



“Dear Sir,

I am in a madhouse and quite forgot your Name or who You are You must excuse me for I have nothing to communicate or tell of and why I am shut up I don't know. I have nothing to say so I conclude.

Yours respectfully.

John Clare”

Mr. Loveless’ new play accompanies Clare in the aftermath of this frank admission. Set in the confines of Clare’s room at Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, where he was resident for the last two decades of his life, we follow Clare through a dark night of the soul and a quest to reclaim his own identity.

This John Clare is an exertion in dualities. His mind functions like a caged bird, fluttering back and forth between reason and despair, sanity and sense. It’s a highwire act that Mr. Hillman walks skilfully, seemingly growing larger and smaller before us with the waxing and waning of Clare’s mood.

By this point Clare had become a stranger to himself. His mind was taken with deceptions, notably that his 'imprisonment' had occurred due to a crime of bigamy over marriages to his actual wife Patty and his first love Mary Joyce. In reality Mary had died some years before and he had not held a relationship with her since childhood. He also carried delusions that he was a successful prize fighter and at other times Lord Byron and Shakespeare.

From this fractured psyche Clare unreliably narrates his own biography. He draws distrustfully from his memory, holding up anecdotes like forgotten artifacts for both his and the audiences inspection; some stir joy, some pain and others bewilderment.

He looks out to the audience, in the shadows of the asylum, as we become part of his hallucinations, the ghosts of future travellers. It's a device which enables Clare to ponder his own legacy, a question alive for him even then. Clare had found early success with the publication of his first poetry collection, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*. It had seen him celebrated amongst the London's literary classes who lauded his authenticity as a bonafide rural poet. This success was not to be replicated again and as he lived out his years his label as the 'peasant poet' became an encumbrance that eclipsed the full extent of his poetry.

Perhaps this is where Mr. Loveless' play is at its best when bringing Clare back into three dimensions. Just as the label of the 'mad poet' has been similarly reductionist to modern audiences, here the madness is made specific and it's easy to identify traits of what we might today recognise as bipolar disorder as Clare lurches between joy and despair in the breadth of a phrase and again as he plays music (Mr. Hillman's own melancholy compositions on the violin) until it wearies him, and when reciting his poetry, specifically *I Am*, with an energy that segues into torment.

As a document it is entirely human and equally fascinating. The success of the play is carried through in both Mr. Loveless' richly poetic text and

the conviction of Mr. Hillman's reading. Whilst 45 minutes may not allow for every facet of his life and persona to be exhumed, its allusion and complexity vividly brings Clare alive for us in a manner that continues to resonate long after.

'I Am John Clare' continues to be performed in 2017. The next scheduled performance is 29th September in Old, Northampton.

For further details email iamjohnclare@gmail.com or follow on twitter [@iamjohnclare17](https://twitter.com/iamjohnclare17)



Sole Music

Our music editor Sun Pie chooses his favourite 12 songs about shoes.
Find the playlist via our twitter feed @NPoetryReview

Boots of Spanish Leather – Bob Dylan

As generous as Dylan gets. Someone is sailing out whilst someone else is sailing in. Either way there's an air of loss and someone is sorrier than ever before.

Flyin' Shoes – Townes Van Zandt

Townes has been cooped up too long. Stood in the kitchen watching the rain fall. It's a broad phrase but it's sorrowful. This is a song about the gift of the blues.

Walk a Mile in My Shoes - Joe South

Nothing could be clearer. A song about rectitude. It's about the fortunes of the downtrodden. A death bed song played at mardi gras.

I've Got Sand In My Shoes – The Drifters

Sonically a daydream. Like listening in to a seashell. It'll wash your ears out like salt water.

Paper in My Shoe – Boozoo Chavis

This song lacks ambiguity. There are no secrets here, nothing lofty. It could be you or could be your neighbour. Everybody gets trodden on once in a while.

My Adidas – Run–D.M.C.

A fat sound and as clean as new sneakers. Take the lid off and sniff!

The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife Are Some Jive Ass Slippers – Charles Mingus

An orchestra playing in the eye of a storm. Like on the titanic if the titanic was a fishing boat. European, blues really. Or a fisherman's bad dream.

Red Shoes By The Drugstore – Tom Waits

Rattlesnake promises. A dimestore novel whispered in the dark. A song about counterfeit loyalty and promises that'll never be kept. Secrets abound.

Clarks Booty – Little John

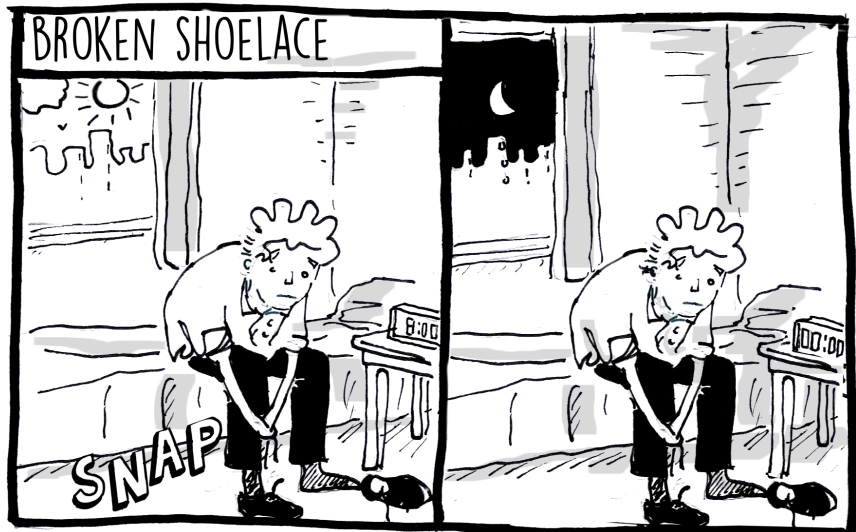
Clarks shoes are king in Jamaica. It's a genre to itself. Nobody lets their feet get trodden on.

The Floppy Boot Stomp – Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band

Truth told slant. Native music. Someone's stirring the pot and someone's getting poured in the soup. Hotter than the blues.

High Heel Sneakers – Tommy Tuckers

When you date mr or mrs wrong you can end up with a black eye and a bruised heart. Music like this will last forever.



Author Biographies

B. CLIVERY is an expert in the field of revisionist art. He resides and Malibu and is the editor of Sluggish: A Magazine of the Transformative Arts.

NEIL ELDER has been published in various magazines and journals including, The Rialto, Prole and Acumen. In 2015 he was a winner of the Cinnamon Press Poetry Pamphlet Prize with 'Codes of Conduct' which was shortlisted for a Sabotage Award. In 2017 Neil won the Debut Poetry Collection Prize with Cinnamon Press and his collection 'The Space Between Us' is due next year. Neil lives in Harrow, N.W London.

R. GERRY FABIAN is a retired English instructor. He has been publishing poetry since 1972 in various poetry magazines. His web page is <https://rgerryfabian.wordpress.com> He is the editor of Raw Dog Press <https://rawdoggpress.wordpress.com> His novels, Memphis Masquerade, Getting Lucky (The Story) and published poetry book, Parallels are available at Smashwords and all other ebook stores.

TIM GADHORN spent many a year working on the greeting card industry before retiring to the town of Kettering in Northamptonshire. Last year he produced an award winning biography of the American poet Henry Timrod entitled Frailer than the Flowers.

JAN OSKAR HANSEN is a poet, story teller and seafarer, born in Stavanger, Norway. He joined the merchant navy at 15 and spent most of his life at sea until settling in the early 90's in Portugal. His poetry has been widely published in hard copy and online, worldwide.

JAMES CROAL JACKSON is the author of The Frayed Edge of Memory (Writing Knights Press, 2017). His poetry has appeared in The Bitter Oleander, Rust + Moth, Cosmonauts Avenue, and elsewhere. He has won the William Redding Memorial Poetry Contest and has been a finalist for

the Princemere Poetry Prize. Find him in Columbus, Ohio or at jimjakk.com.

DOMINIC JAMES lives in Chalford, Glos with his partner, Helen. A member of Richmond's Bright Scarves group he attends poetry meetings up and down the Thames Valley with poems published at home and abroad. His collection 'Pilgrim Station' was published by SPM Publications in December, 2016, and his his blog needs feeding at www.djamespoetic.blogspot.co.uk

MITCHELL KROCKMALNIK GRABOIS has had poems and fiction in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes. His novel, Two-Headed Dog, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. To see more of his work, google Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois. He lives in Denver.

NICHOLAS LAROOMBS is an ultimate marathon walker, half marathon runner and occasional jogger. He wears a size 13 shoe (US 14).

SYDNEY PERERA was born in Sri-Lanka (then known as Ceylon) in 1921. A teacher for many years, Sydney divided his later life between London and Colombo writing poetry, short stories and hosting University of the Third Age (U3A) study groups focusing on Shakespeare's historical plays. Sydney passed away in 2016 leaving behind a large portfolio of unpublished poetry. He is also completed a memoir entitled 'A School Teacher's Odyssey'.

ROB REEVES is a poet and singer-songwriter based in Northamptonshire. He is also the Kettering Parliamentary candidate for the Green Party. His first collection of poetry, Some Poems, is now available through 3P Publishing, and an EP of songs entitled Some Songs will be released later in the year.

SALLY SPEDDING poetry has recently appeared in Poetry Salzburg Review; Envoi; Cinnamon Press; Antiphon and The Seventh Quarry, to name a few. 'The Yellowhammer's Cradle' - her tenth chiller, is out now. On Northampton Sally says, "Although Welsh-born and having returned to live in Wales, my physical connection with Northampton lasted from January 1996 to November 2007, when Jeffrey, my artist husband was appointed as Senior Lecturer at its University, and I taught Creative Writing to Adult Learners both with Northampton FE College and Leicester University. Also, organising classes for all of South Northamptonshire. It was while here that my first chiller, 'Wringland, set on the haunted Fens was published, and 'Cloven,' my second, was inspired by the Welsh drovers' dramatic presence in the county's southern villages. My contact with so many interesting people spurred me on in both crime writing and poetry, which is why Northamptonshire will always have a special place in my heart."

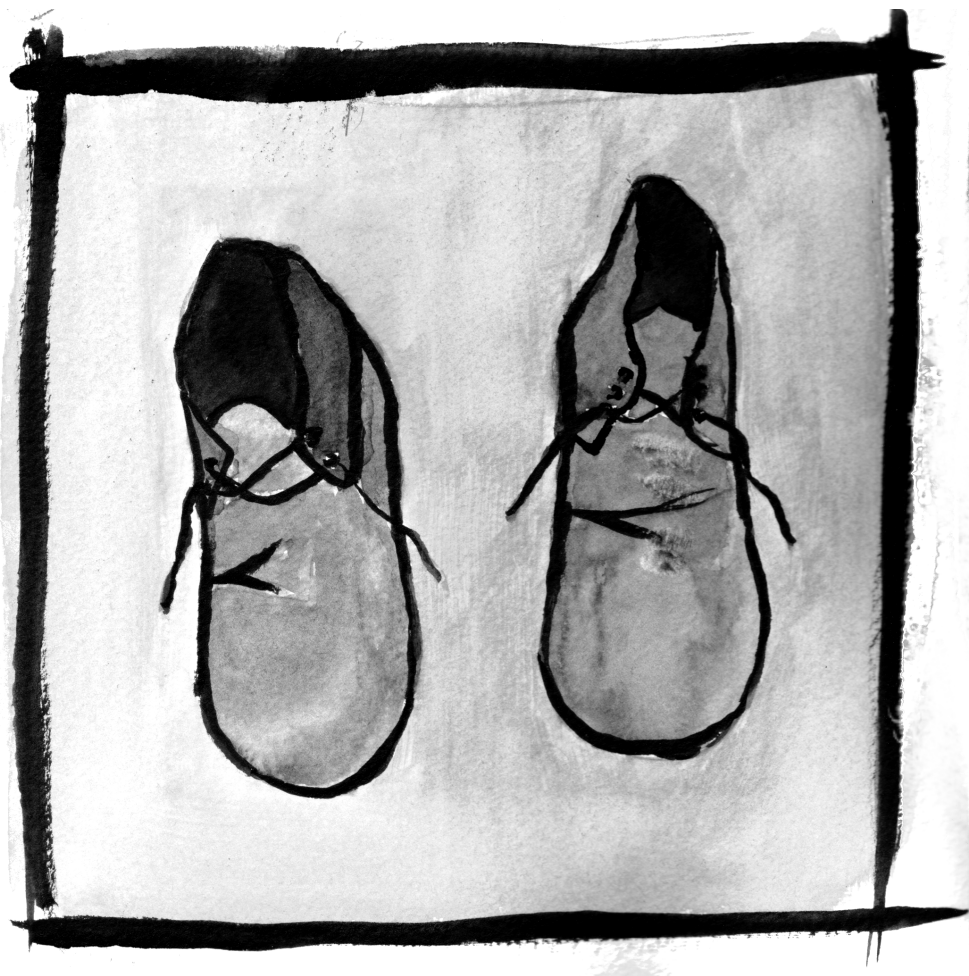
DR PAUL WARING lives in Wirral, UK and previously lived in the United States, Spain and Portugal. He resumed writing poetry in 2016 after retiring as a clinical psychologist. He has also worked in banking and menswear designer. In the 1980's he was a singer/songwriter. His work has featured in Reach Poetry magazine and will be published in Eunoia Review in June 2017. You can read more of his work at <https://waringwords.wordpress.com>

WILLIAM WILSON is an archaeology student who resides in south Northamptonshire at the former home place of George Washington's grand parents. He is currently working on a book of short stories entitled 'Everyday Objects Are Beautiful'



“But Mary was not there; neither could I get any information about her further than the old story of her having died six years ago. But I took no notice of the lie, having seen her myself twelve months ago, alive and well, and as young as ever. So here I am hopeless at home.”

From John Clare's walk, 1841



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