

SCINTILLA

The Journal of the Vaughan Association

26



A journal of literary criticism, prose and new poetry
in the metaphysical tradition

is wonderful. In Vaughan's work, we discover a language that invites more than religious contemplation, it opens the reader to accept the overwhelming reality that he or she is a creature occupying a small piece of what he or she comes to recognize as a limitless universe.

The poetry chosen for volume 26 once again pitches itself within, alongside, and in creative ways 'after' the metaphysical tradition of the Vaughan brothers and their contemporaries. Rosie Jackson's poem 'John Donne Dreams his Still-Born Son Lives' might valuably be seen to rehearse, in a meta perspective, those conceptual and chronological entailments that necessarily prompt inflections and departures: 'It's strange how things are handed down, / like seeing yourself poured out again in a pitcher / of next year's water'.

The pitcher of poetry this volume offers both contains and overflows: Rizwan Akhtar's 'Winter's Specks' is a fluid examination of seasonal change, its syntax slipping over lines. This leaves us 'now reading our histories randomly' from a position of epistemological uncertainty that is reflected in several poems in this issue. Take David Lloyd's re-casting of the medieval Welsh prose cycle, the *Mabinogi*, in which Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor tell 'frothy stories that might / or might not, or must or must not, / be true'. But in that uncertainty is much exuberance – a welcome quality in a time of continuing military conflict and obscene violence, as we see in Julian Stannard's pair of 'bomb' poems: 'Schopenhauer said life was a tin of prunes / which was irritatingly difficult to prize open. / Sheet-washing day is a crackerjack day – a carnival.'

In both its poetry and prose, *Scintilla* 26, like its preceding volumes, asks readers to hold two competing truths in their mind: simultaneously: First, the broad Welsh artistic tradition is important, and, second, artists have engaged that tradition in a variety of unique and significant ways. Throughout its history, this journal has assessed responses to both of those truths and continually added new contributions to those it had made before. In its future *Scintilla* will continue to find new ways to explore how 17th-century thought, metaphysical poetry, and the contributions of complex figures, such as the Vaughan brothers and those in their orbit, work independently and in concert, to teach their audiences to read the world anew.

Split

Some of the words are still intact
like the broken bricks in all walls
it is now merely your memory's
chippings carefully sorted after
squabbling over rising inflation
keeping an embargo on groceries
television shows hosting factions
other than midnight curls in bed
the cat mewed dissonantly making
me look for slippers there was a torn
pair of socks sniggering murky street
the wall clock lost date and the odor
from unwashed bed sheet prevailed
unnecessary text messages and beeps
placated silence crammed in a couch
the milkman sags over the doorbell
a long-time executioner of dreams
a sandwich shrunk in size left under
yellow light of that stale world of burring
refrigerator a skillet all greased settled
other things also wait for the deadlines.

RIZWAN AKHTAR

Winter's Specks

now there is a sun-stripped evening
for a fresh silence clouds hatch clouds

want me to pursue the nameless weight
of a somnambulant conference outside

of dark trees craving attention humbly
solitary they argue absence of words

those still rows of obscure sentences
winter wishes them a crisis over and over

like that woman leaning on black trunks
an only audience to winds' soliloquies

we used to rhyme the fall piecemeal
are now reading our histories randomly.

For a quarter century, *Scintilla* has carried forward the journal's commitment to Welsh literary culture, metaphysical poetry and the seventeenth century poets, Henry and and Thomas Vaughan. As the publication looks to its next 25 years, it will continue to provide a space for creative responses and research through the intersection of new poetry and literary criticism.

"*Scintilla* does an admirable job. It holds to the transformative vision of its tutelary spirit, Henry Vaughan, by publishing not only new poetry but prose that encompasses both the scholarly and the spiritual."

Seamus Heaney

"I have found its informative literary essays ... of great importance for my own work and interests."

John T. Shawcross (University of Kentucky)

"... a wide range of essays ... There is a lot here that is creatively provocative ... Some of the poems seem to me primary."

David Hart (Poetry Wales)

"This remarkable journal contains scholarly and Meditative articles alongside new poems (long and short) and works of visual art, all splendidly produced and a joy to read or contemplate ... *Scintilla* honours an ancient tradition ... but is equally in tune with some of the most fundamental concerns of our own time."

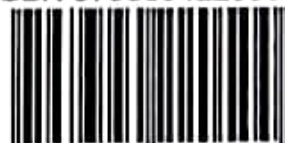
Helen Wilcox (Bangor University)

"Few literary magazines can match its seriousness and its high editorial values."

Stephen Stuart-Smith (Enitharmon Press)

£13.00

ISBN 9798394220500



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