

Two Poems by Keith Flynn

Ceremony

You can't stand on it
or be dumped by it, un-
ceremoniously, or other
wise. It's the bid-rigging

that makes you want to
find your own starlet,
oozily boozy and wildly
willing to succumb to

the dealer and the middle
of his fourth shoe, though
if you ever make a real
run in Vegas, or Hollywood,

then all bets are off, life
won't lay the same way
again and the definitions
of your previous scandals

are formidably challenged
and secretly downgraded,
changed as it were, in the
light of fresh circumstances.

Take Terrorism, for example,
which was once defined
by the Oxford English Dictionary
as *government by intimidation*,

and now whole governments
are intimidated by a handful
of foreign terrorists with their
mind on paradise and their

fingertips sliding greasily
over the uncertain construction
of their underwear bomb.
It takes a village idiot to

kill them softly, with sordid
reviews and bad word of mouth.
The English invented football,
what we roughnecks call soccer,

when they kicked around
the heads of Danish invaders
they had slaughtered. And that's
where the whole mess gets tricky,

you see, one man's game is the
other's life in full, with the power
of luck attesting to the difference
between a top and a bottom.

In ten minutes a hurricane
releases more energy than
all the world's nuclear
weapons detonated at once.

That puts the eye on that
particular apocalypse trigger
in several places at the same
time, and we're already running

out of names for our hurricanes.
There are more plastic flamingoes
than real ones in the United States,
but all the swans in England

are property of the Queen;
just the mention of a public
superstition, for instance,
that the mad, pacing ravens

kept in the Tower of London,
would cause the monarchy to fail
if they were ever to leave,
creates a job for a British citizen,

someone to clip the raven's wings
assuring that they stay put.
Drones in a hive have only
one job, to mate with

their Queen, and those lucky
enough to do so, die in the act.
It is a tender fact that the heart
of a full-grown blue whale

is as large as a small Toyota,
and its tongue is as long as an
elephant, tail to trunk, but
when the dealer spies a whale,

the casino is alerted and his
chances get the swell swatted
right out of them. It ain't the love
that gets you killed, it's the letter,

not the spike that wins the point,
it's the setter, the machinations
of the tapping shoes, accompanied
by piano, go tipping down the

wrong dark alley, just to help
a friend; or you hear the rhythm
in the square and for a second,
bending to listen, step off

in front of the onrushing bus,
whose passengers' mortified
eyes reveal your fresh future,
and its brakes announce your

end.

The Exile

This is my last letter. The first one
disappointed in a love triangle has
lost the game. Some things upon
which I've aimed were undoubtedly
innocent; but that is for others to decide.
I've tried to rope the world in countless
ways and have done the best I can,
with tangled prayers and no reprieve.
The danger in the Beast is its seasons.

The morning star enlightened Buddha
and his first words formed a poem
out of the desperate ardors,
adders made of words, blind as a boxer,
striking out at every sound.
How do we discriminate?
The map is linear, but poetry is
circular and continuous,
untangling as it tells.

Bio:

Keith Flynn (www.keithflynn.net) is the award-winning author of seven books, including five collections of poetry: *The Talking Drum* (1991), *The Book of Monsters* (1994), *The Lost Sea* (2000), *The Golden Ratio* (Iris Press, 2007), *Colony Collapse Disorder* (Wings Press, 2013), and a collection of essays, entitled *The Rhythm Method, Razzmatazz and Memory: How To Make Your Poetry Swing* (Writer's Digest Books, 2007). His latest book is a collaboration with photographer Charter Weeks, entitled *Prosperity Gospel: Portraits of the Great Recession*. From 1984-1999, he was lyricist and lead singer for the nationally acclaimed rock band, The Crystal Zoo, which produced three albums: *Swimming Through Lake Eerie* (1992), *Pouch* (1996), and the spoken-word and music compilation, *Nervous Splendor* (2003). He is currently touring with a supporting combo, The Holy Men, whose album, *LIVE at Diana Wortham Theatre*, was released in 2011. His award-winning poetry and essays have appeared in many journals and anthologies around the world, including *The American Literary Review*, *The Colorado Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *The Cuirt Journal* (Ireland), *Takahe* (New Zealand), *Poetry East*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *Margie*, *The Cimarron Review*, *Rattle*, *Shenandoah*, *Word and Witness: 100 Years of NC Poetry*, *Crazyhorse*, and many others. He has been awarded the Sandburg Prize for poetry, a 2013 NC Literary Fellowship, the ASCAP Emerging Songwriter Prize, the Paumanok Poetry Award and was twice named the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet for NC. Flynn is founder and managing editor of *The Asheville Poetry Review*, which began publishing in 1994. For more information, please visit: www.ashevillepoetryreview.com.