

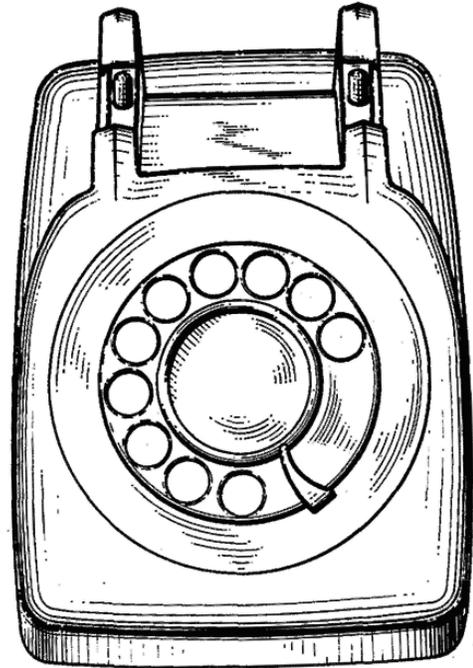
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CONTENTS

Marybeth Rua-Larsen

Fever Tree 3

Sandra Lloyd

Languages 4

Raymond Westcott

Mermaid 5

Sandra Lloyd & Raymond Westcott

Weighing the Glass 6

Chris O'Carroll

Roadrunner and Coyote 7

J.D. Smith

Federal District 8

Luke Stromberg

Patience 9

Upper Darby, PA 10

Frank Osen

Spinning Out 11

Hymn Outside a Bank 12

Quincy R. Lehr

Left on Mission and Revenge 13

Alex Boyd

The Indestructible Old Man 14

Contributors 15

MARYBETH RUA-LARSEN

Fever Tree

Each leaf a palm

 a psalm to share

Each pair of lips

 are ships that flee

Each sea sets course

 a force of tongues

Each plunge toward calm

 a balm with salt

Each vaulted stem

 Je t'aime with curls

Each pearl-dropped line

 a sign, a thief

SANDRA LLOYD

Languages

With words unfamiliar to her ear,
sounds not known to her lips or her tongue,
the word agápe she longs to hear.

Body talk strives and his eyes appear
drawn, discourse strained, weak messages flung
with words unfamiliar to her ear.

The rules of diplomacy adhere.
Practical lines drawn. No sign among
the words; agápe she longs to hear.

Words twisted, contorted, whispered near
two faces on which shy smiles are hung,
with words unfamiliar to her ear.

As all could dissipate, become unclear
like raindrops on water (if love's unsung),
the word agápe she longs to hear.

In love's silence she feels more than mere
words concealed behind his foreign tongue,
with words unfamiliar to her ear:
the word agápe she longs to hear.

RAYMOND WESTCOTT

Mermaid

For Neil Freeman

On a faded forearm
edges bleeding blue
mottled as if misted

he could demand a dance
in idle manly play
of fingers and fibre

strong hands that hauled
rough rope and maybe hoped
to touch a mermaid

We'd whoop our
boisterous boy-laugh
as her scales shivered

and never notice
the silent sinews
of the other arm

an anchor there wrapped
right 'round, sliding surely
down to solid ground

SANDRA LLOYD & RAYMOND WESTCOTT

Weighing the Glass

Now it snows the last slat shows
one timber limb marks the line alone
leave the horse, tromp covered earth
halting, hungry, he pictures home.

The poor beast stamps, she'd plainly move
her shivered skin tense, soft ears listen
but slowly on, without her slog
his haunt draws near, its entrance hidden.

A door is there and dark behind
he leaves iced air, tramps inside
commitments linger like frozen breath
fixed in time save his fiery pride.

Words heard before are brought to mind
mulled and hemmed, sound and marked,
and set aside and slyly eyed
across and down, all white and black.

Beckon the woods, beyond the door
first measured draught and then decide
weighing the glass against the gusts
bottle the ache, cast brewing aside.

And breach the door, the wind blows through
tracks warmth and trusted promises
playing faintly in his plaintive brain
feint by custom, fetters, compromises.

Commitments keep, or doors will close
threshold knowingly kissed by degrees,
the horse, for sure, has other thoughts
she'll make for woods both dark and deep.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Roadrunner and Coyote

My dumb luck trumps his ingenuity:
He paints a tunnel meant to fool my eye
So I'll run at a wall of rock and die.
But nature's laws do not apply to me;
Assuming insubstantiality,
I ghost through solid stone and get away.
My wily foe, constrained by everyday
Reality, can't follow where I flee.

The laws of nature nail me every time;
The real world is my sentence and my crime:
When I run at the mountainside's faux portal,
I splat like any ordinary mortal
While his beeps mock my vulnerability.
In this one-joke cartoon, the joke's on me.

J.D. SMITH

Federal District

In Lanyard Land the young aspire,
With fresh degrees and selfless fire,
 To shape the policy debate
 And steer aright the ship of state
The old have run aground in mire.

Fact sets a limit on desire.
To have a voice, one must acquire
 The means and friends that carry weight
In Lanyard Land.

When wisdom fails to find a buyer,
Agendas turn to who will hire
 Those left outside the narrow gate.
 Indentured at the going rate,
Those who were young wait to retire
In Lanyard Land.

LUKE STROMBERG

Patience

His ears set back and eyes fixed on the dark
Beneath the radiator, the cat crouches,
Glimpsing whiskers there, two feet, a nose.
And when a mouse decides to test the light –
Sniffing the kitchen air – he rises higher
On his haunches – but he doesn't pounce.
Instead, he allows it to escape, tail twitching
Behind it, back into the dark, untried.

Reckless, he waits. Patience is also risk.
And though it may not seem this way to most,
That takes real nerve: letting a chance slip past,
Believing that a better one will come.
Meanwhile, the pretzel bag's chewed full of holes.
Turds are on the counter. The mouse, alive.

Upper Darby, PA

You lie, a tangle of lives,
West of Philadelphia,
A secret nobody keeps.
Home-town of row-homes and play-
Grounds squared by chain-link fences,
Of barber shops and delis,
I'm caught in you like a swamp.
Neighborhoods like Babylon's
After the tower toppled:
A flurry of different tongues
Thrown together in one place
Where old Greeks sing in gardens
Among tall tomato plants
And Sikhs crowd the gurdwara,
Confusing all the bigots.
Your train tracks and maple trees
Have got a hold on my life.
That empty pizzeria
Is where my parents will meet.
My uncle's squad car cruises
Down these blocks from the Sixties.
I'll die on 69th Street
In front of a sneaker store
Or wig shop, clutching my chest
From the heart attack that killed
My granddad at the Exxon
On Marshall, before the flood.

FRANK OSEN

Spinning Out

My son has driver's ed at Triple A,
and I take auto courses on my own,
parked and waiting here today,

retreading memories of cars I've known –
when a forgotten evening rumbles past
from thirty-odd years back, then cuts in front,

its momentum overtaking me so fast
that suddenly I'm running through a stunt
I once performed in Paleolithic time

to learn how ancient Mustangs cornered:
I'm sixteen, a primitive jerk at unknown forces
and I, my car, and all our unharnessed horses

go bungeeing around an unreal bend.
I draw in air, but can't draw to an end
until I'm sideways on a fading road.

Where, left to right my way, I must have done.
Though I'm not sure, from here, if I'd forerun
a curve to come with that old episode,

or if a warning light went on somehow,
or why the turn should petrify me now.

Hymn Outside a Bank

Was it a stunting or a growth?
It was the risk of so much safety. It was both.

Turner Cassity, "He Whom Ye Seek"

I can, although the branch on which it hangs is dead,
still make a brief obeisance at this ATM
and see through sea-green glass, as to an ocean bed,
the sort of deep in which you set the requiem.

A marbled dark where tellers, clerks and notaries
would tick the hours, while family trust and will reposed
in vaults, and customers could flock like votaries,
all free to doubt that any futures were foreclosed.

You wrote you went to one such place, that you were brisk
and (transubstantiation working as it must)
interred your poems, noting it involved some risk
to put your life to words, before the flesh was dust.

There's no accounting of their later resurrection.
Like old Rosetti, you were silent as the grave,
but meditating on the wealth in your collection
replenishes the faith that somehow, verse can save.

QUINCY R. LEHR

Left on Mission and Revenge

For Tony, Marcel, and the rest of the gang

Another greedy chancer
swears he's not the same.
Sartorially challenged,
politically tame,

all mouth and mission statement,
all circumstance and luck
he makes you think of oldsters
still trying hard to fuck

but sadly out of K-Y
and sadly way off course,
beyond the Will to Power
or even use of force

to satisfy a tickle
with a furtive scratch
without becoming flaccid
or wondering what they'll catch.

Still waiting for a Savior –
or is it daily bread,
or maybe some aspiring
mouth to give him head? –

he fails to note his zipper
is firmly still in place –
a sin that never happened,
a voided fall from grace.

ALEX BOYD

The Indestructible Old Man

The old man is paper-thin and indestructible, bristling with years like static electricity, enters each second like a letter arriving. He can close his eyes, feel rain holding the earth all over with tiny, bursting fingers. He walks into a hundred bars at once, to be there to lean back and say things like listen to that wind, so that the world now is as the world was a thousand years ago, with an old man leaning back to say listen to that wind. The millennium was just another year, using his body as a ticket, spending life a day at a time like someone dropping coins through a small hole in his pocket. He'll never forget her heels trading places quickly down the street, the way finding the hidden river of her pulse felt more intimate than anything, as something even a husband might never know. He knows he may someday pass away in his sleep, dreaming of the last thing he thought about that day, like a final diver in the pool pausing, turning to come back up when the lights go out.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marybeth Rua-Larsen lives on the south coast of Massachusetts, half-way between Boston and Cape Cod (but closest to Providence, RI), and teaches composition at Bristol Community College. Her poems, essays, flash fiction and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Raintown Review*, *Angle*, *Crannog*, *The Poetry Bus*, *Free Inquiry* and *The Nervous Breakdown*. She is a book reviewer for *NYQ Reviews* and won the Poetry category in the 2011 Over the Edge New Writer of the Year Competition in Galway, Ireland. Her crown of sonnets, "Voices from the Pastrana Tapestries," is an ekphrastic sequence responding to 15th century Portuguese tapestries commissioned by King Afonso V to commemorate his military advance on Northern Africa and will be read at the 2013 Massachusetts Poetry Festival in Salem, MA.

Sandra Lloyd is currently working on an MA in the Field of Creative Writing at the University of Toronto. Her poetry and prose have appeared in publications including *The Antigonish Review*, *Other Voices*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Puritan*. She received a literary prize from MSVU in Halifax, served on the advisory board for McMaster University's Main Street Anthology and is a member of the Hamilton Poetry Centre. "Weighing the Glass" is an alternating, line-by-line collaboration she wrote with Raymond Westcott, whose work also appears in this issue. Sandra lives in Hamilton, Ontario.

Raymond Westcott is a mathematician working for a Canadian bank in Toronto, Ontario. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in English and Mathematics from the University of Toronto, and this is his first published work of poetry. Raymond lectures part-time in the Masters program in Mathematical Finance at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, where he lives with his wife, two children, a dog and an Extra Dog.

Chris O'Carroll is a writer and an actor. A native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, he has lived in Toronto, Leicestershire, and many parts of the United States, including New York City, New Orleans, and Kansas. His poems have appeared in *Antiphon*, *The Chimaera*, *14 by 14*, *Light Quarterly*, and *Measure*, among other print and online journals.

J.D. Smith's third collection, *Labor Day at Venice Beach*, was published in 2012. *Notes of a Tourist on Planet Earth*, a humor collection including both poetry and prose, came out in March, 2013. He holds an M.A. from the

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University.

Luke Stromberg received both his BA and MA in English at West Chester University. In 2008, his poem “Black Thunder” was set to music by composer Melissa Dunphy and performed at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, PA. His work has appeared in several literary journals and was also featured on multiple occasions in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Luke lives in Upper Darby, PA and works as an adjunct English instructor at Eastern University and West Chester University.

Frank Osen won the 2012 Able Muse Book Award for his poetry manuscript *Virtue, Big As Sin*, selected by final judge, Mary Jo Salter. He was born in Yokosuka, Japan, grew up in Southern California, and is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and Loyola Law School. His work has appeared in numerous print and online journals. He has won the Best American Poetry Poem Contest, and has been a finalist for the Nemerov Sonnet Award, the Morton Marr Award, and the Writers Digest Poetry Competition. His work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and frequently appears in *The Spectator* (UK). He lives in Pasadena, California, and walks to work at the Huntington Library.

Quincy R. Lehr's poetry and criticism have appeared in numerous venues in North America, Europe, and Australia. His collections include *Across the Grid of Streets*, *Obscure Classics of English Progressive Rock*, and *Shadows and Gifts*. Oklahoma-born, he lives in Brooklyn and is the editor of *The Raintown Review*.

Alex Boyd's latest book of poems is called *The Least Important Man*.