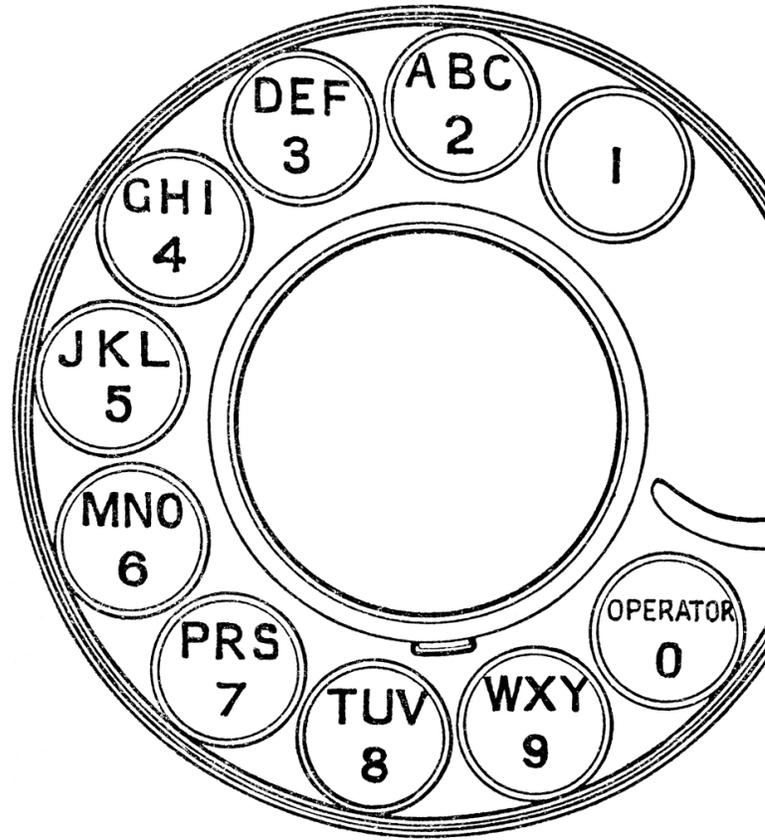


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ANNA M. EVANS

Map of Rugeley

This is the Building, where, for seven years
you held me like a changeling underground.
This is the Library where I hid my tears;
these are the books that bound them. This is the sound
of the bell; this is the smell of chalk and Dettol.
This is the score I vowed that I would settle.

This is the Town Square, where I walked, despite
your scornful girls, your petty thuggish gangs.
This is the Chip Shop where my appetite
was bullied from me. Where this awning hangs,
I sheltered from them, and your ceaseless rain,
watched cigarette butts drift toward the drain.

This is the Market where I squandered money
on cheap make-up and jewelry, intending
to reinvent myself. This is how funny
I looked. This is you laughing, not pretending
not to. This is me crying in your Park,
walking home alone in the rising dark.

This is the Bus Stop where I used to cower,
guessing at your next line of attack.
This the last place you had any power.
This is me, leaving and not looking back.
This is how I disown you in a poem:
you're Nowhere, and I will not call you home.

KIM BRIDGFORD

Inflatable Doll Goes to the Office Christmas Party

First, what to wear to make the best impression?
The pine tree sweater? The sparkly satin sheath?
The birthstones organized to make a wreath?
The Opium (her scent but out of fashion)?

And does she prop herself against the Xerox?
And does she have some punch arranged beside?
And does she ignore the ones who have had Botox,
And does she kiss the patriarch and bride?

And when the music starts, what does she do?
Does she hide out in closets meant for mops:
And to the tune of "Silver Bells" (and "Jingle")
Become one of the many office props?
They like the pleasant polyurethane tingle.

And then, of course, there's New Year's to get through.

Inflatable Doll Wants to Go Back to School and Better Herself

He doesn't mind the concerts, or the gym;
He doesn't mind the lunches with her friends.
He's worried that, one day, she'll surpass him,
And we all know the way this story ends:

Yet still he's proud she shows initiative
The way she tries to shape the narrative
In her own way. She thinks she'll take some writing
Classes – some poetry or fiction, biting

Off just enough. She visits one night class,
Is shocked at all the work gone into this.
Who knew that poets, like Prometheus,
Picked at their livers, then went on to kiss

The pain they'd caused by working on a poem?
She finds that it is easier to stay home.

Inflatable Doll Removes the Mirrors From Her House

So many weeks they spooked her: in all rooms,
The bedroom most of all. She found them creepy.
(There are the things you do not want to see.)
She found life better with interior aims.

She found that he liked watching who he was,
As if they were a movie he was writing.
She liked the daily jolt of some pizzazz.
No more, she said. It wasn't that exciting.

Instead, they lingered in this watchless space
Of human contact and her blown-up face,
And they were – dare she say it? – intimate.
Before work, he checked in the rearview mirror.
She floated on the beauty of each hour.
To shape her life, she needed to be in it.

Inflatable Doll Masquerades as a Porpoise on Halloween

Of course. Just as you also knew she wore
Her camouflage and arrogance to war
(They knocked it out of her, of course they would.
That's how you treat the useful and the good.)

On Halloween, she wanted to be Flipper
(Rejected Gumby, Cinderella's slipper,
A balloon's sadness, a wiener dog of air,
A highway mascot waving "Over here.")

How great to be a honeymooner's choice,
The passion made of waves and short, barked voice,
The shape of what is closest to a human,
And yet can swim away, be mermaid, prawn,
The manifestations ocean can try on.
To be a living thing. For once think twice.

JANICE D. SODERLING

Mourning

It was a summer day much like today,
flowery and fine. He started out at dawn
determined to breach the gateway.

The birds woke to find him gone,
their song winging with him. The long grasses
stood quiet, querulous, for the winds had flown

with him, sighing. Only the asses
in the fields kicked and brayed. Discord
reigned. No rhythmic patter of rain-voices

fell on pale leaves. The brooks in dread
clung to cold stones, unmoving, still.
He took only himself, his lute, an intrepid

choir of desolation and his half-mad longing. *No jail,
not even Hades' own, can hold,* he said,
against my sweet dirge, his eyes seeking the hole

that gapes lonely for the brave as for the coward.
Death, deaf to every voice, returned him empty-handed.

Out of Paradise

A closely woven stillness lines the air
like linen bedding in a lifted coffin.
Though silence is a hallmark of our time, not often
has the hush been so oppressive. Where
the sand fox sprawls, sprawls too the shattered hare.
Cadavers of gazelle and roe deer stiffen;
the wadded pods of thorn trees swell and burst.
If when you ponder on this devastated garden,
its wretched shame, its bottomless despair,
think not animal, but human, shreds in Eden.
And human was the animal lately passing there.

MELISSA BALMAIN

Bird in the Hand

It doesn't caw or hunt or fly.
It can't peck anybody's eye
or even grow a single lousy feather.
One-clawed, no match for any tom,
it's stranded on a leafless palm
regardless of the season, time, or weather.

Yet what's the bird that, all alone,
sticks up for you when gibes have flown
and you don't care to verbalize or linger;
when someone's mocked you to your face
or cut you off or swiped your space –
what bird? The one that moonlights as a finger.

On Turning 40

Feeling old? Here's a trick to feel great:
just consider the marvelous state
of our medical care
and our water and air.
I hear 40's the new 38.

Time-Lapse

3 a.m.

Awake (with no clue why),
you toss and yearn, regretting
spent decades – it's upsetting
to think how old you're getting! –
and mourn that you must die.

7 a.m.

Face plastered to the bed,
nostalgic thoughts forgotten
(your brain's too full of cotton),
neck hot, back sore, breath rotten,
you wish that you were dead.

JESSE ANGER

Sunday Afternoon

The church dark and ranging,
its trick distances slowing
our steps. Past the pews

a faint light outlines
the altar and the wooden cross.
The triptych window glows

halos and indigo –
we keep to the shadows.
I cradle you like a whisper

from station to station. A sliver
of stained-glass light beneath
your eye. I tell of the river –

the dove anoints his crown
descending through a leaden
latticework cloud. I speak

above your head, my son,
hushed in this empty room.
I do not tell you how

his blood made wine – how
white was not the color
of the lamb, or how many

dead tongues take up
this silence. We leave without
a prayer. I set you down

in the bright hallway with
the sharp white sun
like a wing in your hair.

The Sun

And it may go unnoticed
closing slow –
the last patch of grass
covered by snow.

As a word's many senses.
As the one
facet of an onyx
struck by sun.

And it may come unnoticed
in a thought,
a small white spider
till it drops

as starlight spun from bluer
black – bereft,
the aggregate of everything
that's left.

CONTRIBUTORS

Anna M. Evans's poems have appeared in journals including the Harvard Review, Rattle, the Atlanta Review, the Evansville Review and 32 Poems. She is a graduate of the Bennington College MFA Program. Her poem, "Zeitgeber" (included in *The Stolen From*) recently won the 2012 Rattle Readers' Choice Award.

Her chapbooks *Selected Sonnets* and *Swimming* are available from Maverick Duck Press.

Her translations chapbook, *Saint-Pol-Roux & Other Poems from the French*, and her newest chapbook, *The Stolen From: Poems About Memory & Alzheimer's*, are available from Barefoot Muse Press.

Anna is a former President of the Burlington County Poets of New Jersey, and a member of the Quick and Dirty Poets. She is editor of *The Raintown Review*, and Contributing/Online Editor for the *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*. She is accredited by the New Jersey Artists in Education program to work with Children in Grades K-8, and she teaches poetry at the West Windsor Art Center, and writing at Richard Stockton College of NJ.

Kim Bridgford is the director of the West Chester University Poetry Center and the West Chester University Poetry Conference, the largest all-poetry writing conference in the United States. As the editor of *Mezzo Cammin*, she founded the *Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project*, which was launched at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington in March 2010, and recently celebrated its third anniversary at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in affiliation with the exhibition *The Female Gaze*. Her collaborative work with the visual artist Jo Yarrington has been honored with a Ucross fellowship. Bridgford is the author of seven books of poetry, including *Bully Pulpit*, a book of poems on bullying, and *Epiphanies*, a book of religious poems. She has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Connecticut Post*, on NPR and the website of *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, and in various headline news outlets.

Janice D. Soderling's poetry, fiction and translations have appeared in Canadian venues such as *The Malahat Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Event*, *ditch*, *Apple Valley Review*, *The Montreal Review*, and are included in the 5-year anthology recently released by *The Centrifugal Eye*. Work is forthcoming outside Canada at *American Arts Quarterly* and *Ink, Sweat and Tears*. She lives in Sweden.

Melissa Balmain is the new editor of *Light* (formerly *Light Quarterly*), a light-

verse journal that's moving online this summer after 20 years in print. Her poems have appeared in such anthologies as *The Iron Book of Humorous Verse* and *Killer Verse*, and in journals and magazines including *American Arts Quarterly*, *Lighten Up Online*, *Measure*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Spectator*, and of course *Light*. To support her lucrative poetry habit, she writes articles and humor pieces for magazines and teaches writing at the University of Rochester.

Jesse Anger is a folk musician and audio-engineer. He juggles fatherhood, university classes and pins. His poems have appeared recently online and in print at venues like: *Arc*, *Kin*, *The Raintown Review*, *Measure*, *Angle*, *Shot Glass*, *The Headlight Anthology* and *The Void*. You can find photos and more of his poetry at his blog *A Loom In The Dark*.