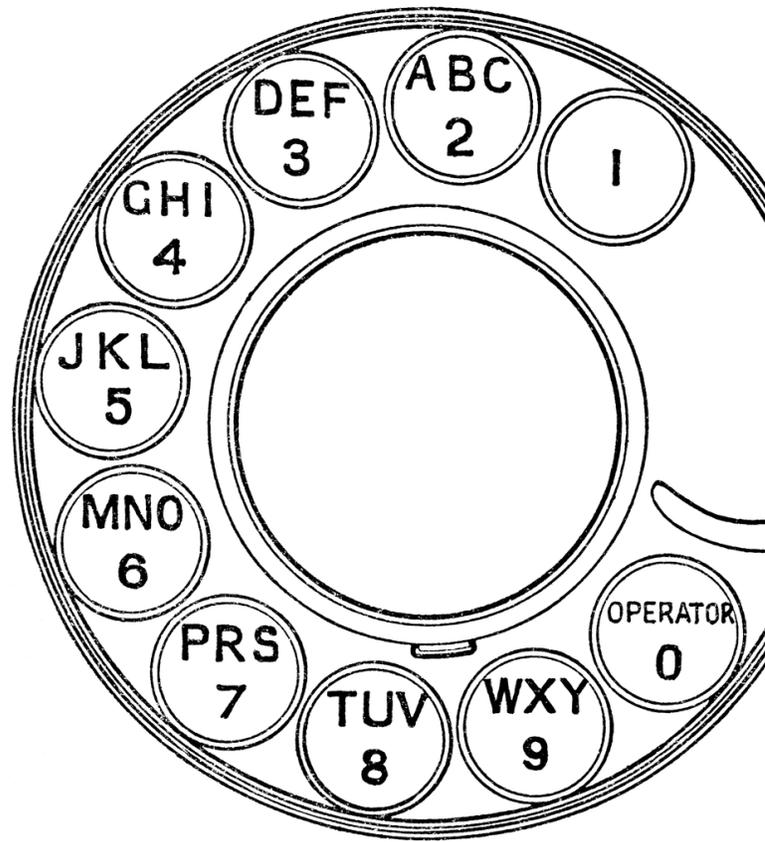


# THE ROTARY DIAL

ISSUE 6  
AUGUST 2013

[www.therotarydial.ca](http://www.therotarydial.ca)



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ANNA M. EVANS

### **The Rule Is Not To Besiege a Walled City**

I lived for seven months in a walled city.  
I think it was Jerusalem or Troy.  
The children were well fed, the women pretty –  
the kind of place the world aches to destroy.  
So when the enemy had staked their tents  
I asked about the general unconcern.  
They pointed at the strength of their defense.  
*The enemy, they said, will never learn.*

Yes, I was with them when the food ran short.  
I think it was Baghdad or Syracuse,  
any battle anybody fought.  
You may have seen it on the evening news.  
I'd read *The Art of War* – I thought we'd win.  
It wasn't me who let the first one in.



HEIDI CZERWIEC

**Rondeau: Let Them Eat Cake**

Let them eat cake, the Queen allegedly said  
as her countrymen starved, denied their daily bread.  
Much less cake, whose recipe demands  
a decadence of flour and sugar that France  
could not provide, why cake's reserved instead

for grand occasions. It's why, when couples wed,  
the cake confers fertility on marriage beds,  
on beds of guests whose well-wishing commends,  
let them eat cake!

Sharing in the ceremony, all are fed.  
Now our son turns one. May the dread  
of scarcity spare him. May the gods or random chance  
grant him buttercream across his hands,  
between his fingers: let him smear, let him spread,  
let him eat cake.

JOSEPH TATE

**Excerpt from "Leave"**

She IM'd him to have a one-on-one discussion of the sort that runs one way. "I'll meet you in Crayon in five."

The building's smaller conference rooms ("larger" here means 12 x 12 or more) seldom have conferences, whatever that word might mean – he'd never seen one happen. Mt Porte Crayon Meeting Room, its full name, (the room names match the P1000 peaks in West Virginia, 44 in all) is nearest to the elevator hall and has more privacy despite the glass door and triple-paned windows. The view is dense with bushes, oval waxy leaves and a sloping parking lot (its striping paint bright and clean in the slow autumn, clumsy sun). The room's east/west left/right untextured walls are two shades less than avocado green. The vinyl chairs complement with a thin, dull algae hue. The two opposing high sheer walls, without pretense, are sand dune white.

Early per usual he sat and traced the heat-shimmer edged shadows slanting across the table – slight burlled birch-veneered – and dulled through the clanging, thin metal blinds. The Polycom unplugged and dusty, smelled of fresh Saltines.

She entered harried, tight: a magnet coiled with "Sorry! :)" pleasantries (her office on this floor and one row down). If middle management, you place your iPhone near where your wrists will rest while talking slow. The managers are taught a dialect that has a sour-sounding lilt. It's meant to sooth the employee. You also learn to posture-check yourself ("for some, your back might hurt at first") and "I-to-eye" contact.

He rubbed his bitten fingernails (one bled a bit this morning on the way to work). After the half-expected work-life balance talk, or rather "talking-to," she made her point: he had to use his annual leave. This year, he would. She checked her notepad (yes, despite what century we're living in she takes her meeting notes in longhand, tall wide letters she circles and underlines) and found the page: I'm glad to hear it. Laurence. Yes – (Law- or Laurence, pronounced the same but spelled however the barista feels that day; he gave up spelling out the name last year.) the month of April rarely gets approved. The IRM's the same as US Code so in this case tradition matters most. August? May, September can be nice. The Sharepoint site would have the forms and someone had the room booked after them.

He shifted, looked outside. A heavy lull began to fill the room. She hemmed again. She'd check the lifecycle (their certified approach to IT service management, called ITIL version 3, or "eye-till three" was current, practical and common sense). The data service RESTful API was documented well and April c/sh-ould be fine. About one week, including the 15th. You'll need to take a laptop, check your mail, be – business hours – available by phone. So what're your (grabbing iPhone) plans?

Expedia and Travelocity had zero flights from HGR to DBQ. (On Travelocity that search returned a message worded: "problem processing," etc. The debug console showed a client-side request timeout and fail.) More googling, he found a route that worked (the airport codes return the best results). From IAD to MLI, with one connecting stop at DTW. The cheapest Delta flight from Apr 10 to 17. Reserved the rental car without an upgrade or a package deal.

Four-door Corolla. Manual windows. Blue.  
Few names of cars seem well thought out.  
Corolla: petals of a flower form  
a whorl within the sepals and enclose  
the reproductive organs.

Focusing,  
he checked the inkjet; pulled up Google maps  
to count the total miles, the total hours.

DAVID WHIPPMAN

**Slim Volume**

His frame was gaunt, his income was erratic:  
The street ignored the writer high above  
Who wrote and brooded in his lonely attic,  
Hungering for poetry and love.

But now, although his Muse is rather quiet,  
The royalties and praises never cease.  
He's found his niche, but needs to watch his diet –  
The doctor says he's clinically obese.

DANA ROBBINS

### **The Sweeper**

His old-world mother, dignified and proud,  
never ventured out without her pearls.  
Her hair had gone all wiry somehow.  
He brushed it back and held her hand, a bird's.

And heard her meager breath all through that night  
until the brittle morning when it stopped.  
You don't know it's over and it's not.  
Until it is, all you do is wait.

The best we can expect at our life's end  
is to move slowly slower as we wend  
our way to where we do not move at all,  
lights that flicker out inside a tall  
skyscraper, floor by floor, and room by room  
behind the janitor, pushing his broom.

SUE KANHAI

**Here Is Gone**

The centre shifts, its lines redrawn.  
Nothing seems to want to stay.  
Look around you. Here is gone.

The map that we relied upon  
showed us only one true way.  
The centre shifts, its lines redrawn.

The sun forgets and sleeps through dawn.  
In day-black we each go astray.  
Look around you. Here is gone.

Words extended then withdrawn;  
debts impossible to pay.  
The centre shifts, its lines redrawn.

Nostalgia is a fickle swan;  
she dips her bill and glides away.  
Look around you. Here is gone.

Pack your belongings and move on.  
Tell the children lost in play.  
The centre shifts, its lines redrawn.  
Look around you. Here is gone.

TAYLOR MALI

### **Stalking the Air**

Our cat crouches before the fridge and does not budge  
except to scratch the floor, as if to ask for more  
of the warm air that gently blows from under there,  
the price and consequence of making ice and keeping cold  
this old house's daily food.

But something in the way he might at any moment pounce  
upon the warm and at once humming air that fills this house  
makes me wonder if under there we might have mice  
or at least a mouse. And part of me wishes that we do  
(have mice, that is, if only one).

In my heart I want to give him that: some tiny thrill  
with four feet and a tail to bat about all night  
and finally kill come morning, lick bloodless  
and leave like some precious gift or warning  
upon the front door's welcome mat.

What greater gift than a mouse to a cat?

## Give It Away or Put It Away or Throw It Away

At the end of the marriage,  
whatever stuff is left –  
like crutches or rustic tools  
you rarely used, tight shoes,  
dusty books, or even love –  
whatever lies piled on the floor  
you have to find a way to store  
after the divorce. Unless  
of course before that day  
you took the time to give away

or sell (at a tag sale or on eBay)  
all that did not break apart  
in the course of breaking up  
your home and heart,  
some of it, no doubt, cracked  
from the start, or else  
abandoned in the name  
of moving on and living;  
everything must be given away,  
or in some other way forgiven.

What's left must be stored somewhere,  
be it in the flood-cursed basement  
of a friend, or worse, the rented  
metal room where love, like wine,  
goes to improve but never does.  
Or, at least, the body, let loose  
in memory's uncharted attic,  
or left undressed in some empty  
chamber, say, the 5 by 10 container  
in the middle in your chest.

SETH BRAVER

**Fog on Tolmie Bay**

Pebble beach.  
Edge of land.  
Ocean's end.

Void of speech,  
here I stand  
and attend  
to the white  
veils of mist  
on the bay.

Shrouds of light  
will persist  
through the day,  
but prepare  
to entomb  
it in hours.

As I stare  
through the gloom,  
it devours  
sea and sky,  
drowning all  
in its fog.

By and by  
there's a small  
epilogue:

Emerging laughing from the flux,  
two iridescent dabbling ducks.

ALAN GIRLING

**After the Accident**

*In which you were hit by a car that came out of nowhere while you were travelling through an intersection.*

There is no pushing Play.  
Only Forward. Pause. *Impact*.  
And Rewind. No reason in the loop.  
Just the causes that you find.

Forward. Pause. *Impact*.  
Rewind. There is no pushing Play.  
Your life is in suspension.  
The road you were taking, taken away.

Pause. *Impact*. Rewind. Stop.  
Play is pushing a hard choice.  
The spirit's willing; the body is not.  
Beyond the loop, hear a truer voice:

There is no pushing Play.  
Rewind. *Impact*. And Pause.  
Forward now. At a different speed.  
Time moves by inscrutable laws.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

**Searching for the Tree, San Fernando**

The high rims of this valley fringe the blue  
With every shape and shade of green. No way  
To count the trees, nor to explain why you  
Felt such a summons from that one. All day,  
With lizards and songbirds for our companions,  
We two explored the routes up that tree's slope  
Through bougainvillea and orange blossom canyons  
Colored and scented likewise with your hope  
That every time we came around a bend  
We'd have our moment of discovery.  
We share this payoff at our journey's end:  
We're back down in the valley, where the tree  
    We never reached crowns the horizon still.  
    We hold hands, gaze together up the hill.

## 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.

**E. Martin Pedersen** left his hometown of San Francisco in 1978 to ramble around the world, finally putting down roots in Messina, Sicily, where he still lives. He teaches English (composition, translation, literary appreciation) at the local university. His academic writing won him the EdPress feature award in 1998. He has published two books on traditional American music based on his MA thesis in folklore. His unpublished novel, *Heal Thyself*, is a story of redemption and broken promises in post-earthquake San Francisco. Recently he has had work published in *Grey Sparrow Review*, *Lyrical Passion* (Best of the Best Haiku Award, 2012), *American Athenaeum*, *Bareback Magazine*, *Paper Wasp*, *Bear Creek Haiku*, *Free Flash Fiction*, *Life As An* [insert label here], and *Literary Orphans*. Martin is a 2011 alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.

**Heidi Czerwiec** is associate professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of North Dakota, where she is Co-Director of the annual UND Writers Conference. She is the author of the chapbooks *Self-Portrait as Bettie Page* (Barefoot Muse Press, forthcoming 2013) and *Hiking the Maze* (Finishing Line Press, 2009). She has poems and translations published or forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Absinthe*, and *South Dakota Review*.

**Joseph Tate** lives in Seattle, Washington. His poems and multimedia work are forthcoming or appear in *Euphony*, *Bad Robot Poetry*, *E-ratio*, *Yemassee* and other publications. He edited the *Music and Art of Radiohead* and has

published and lectured on Shakespeare and prosody.

**David Whippman** is British, in his 60s, and spent most of his working life in the field of healthcare. (He's now retired.) He writes prose as well as poetry.

After graduating from Wellesley College with a BA in History, **Dana Robbins** received a JD from Columbia University and practiced law unhappily for 28 years. In 2009, she retired and moved to Portland Maine where she pursued a lifelong interest in poetry at OLLI and in the Stonecoast Writers Program, where she completed an MFA in January, 2013. Her poetry has appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *Shemom Magazine*, and *OLLI Review*. Dana's poem, *The Apple Tree*, received an honorable mention in the 2013 Fish Poetry Contest and will be included in the 2013 Fish Anthology. Her poem, *At the End of Day*, was the winner of the 2013 Musehouse Poem of Hope contest.

**Sue Kanhai** has a degree in French Language, Literature and Translation from the University of Toronto and a certificate in Creative Writing from U of T's School of Continuing Studies. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in the *Ottawa Arts Review*; the anthology *Desperately Seeking Susans*, Oolichan Books; and *The Binnacle*, University of Maine at Machias.

New York City performance poet **Taylor Mali** is one of the most well-known poets to have emerged from the poetry slam movement and one of the original poets to appear on the HBO series "Def Poetry Jam." He is a four-time National Poetry Slam champion and the author of three books, most recently, "What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World." Since 1998, over one thousand people have become teachers after reading or listening to Taylor Mali's passionate poems about his experiences teaching middle school, high school, and college. To mark the achievement, he recently donated 12 inches of his hair to the American Cancer Society.

**Seth Braver** lives in Olympia, Washington with his wife and two basset hounds. His right foot is slightly turned out, making him easy to track in the snow. His poetry has previously appeared in *Angle*, *Kin*, *Umbrella*, *Snakeskin*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, and *Four and Twenty*.

**Alan Girling** lives in Richmond, B.C. He has written fiction, non-fiction, plays and poetry. These days, for some reason, it's mainly poetry. His work has appeared all over: online, in magazines, in newspapers, on the radio, in anthologies, on stage, at coffee house readings and once in a shop window in Hamilton, Ontario. He was a finalist for the 2003 Larry Turner Award for non-fiction and winner of Vancouver Co-op Radio's 2006 Community Dreams Poetry Contest. His short play, 'Whatever Happened to Tom Dudkowski' was produced for Vancouver's 2007 Walking Fish Festival.

**Chris O'Carroll**, a native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a writer and an

actor. His poems have appeared in Angle, First Things, The Flea, Lighten Up Online, and New Verse News, among other print and online journals.