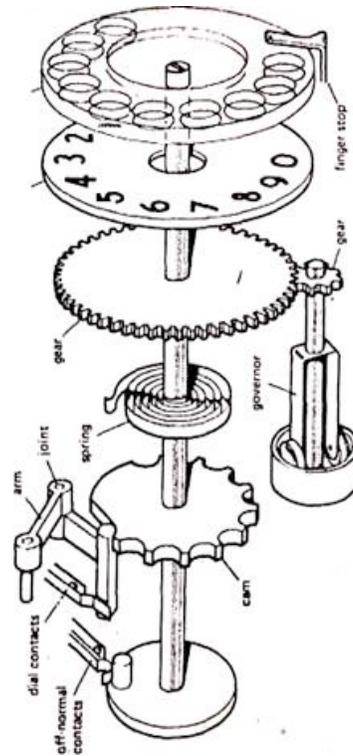


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GREGORY CROSBY

Fashion Forward

Plaid is all the rage in Purgatory.
Paradise is a periwinkle sock.
In Limbo, the infant eschews pink & blue
for the darkest red diaphanous smock.

Down in Hell, black is the new black. Also
the old black. It goes with everything.
Tattered swatches of houndstooth cling
to two out of three Cerberean mouths.

Valhalla's a faded concert jersey:
Iron Maiden, unwashed & quite holy.
The undying cottons of Elysium
turn dingy, but only very slowly.

Skin, it seems, is always ready to wear.
Eternity wants a tailored look.
A seaming. Flares, cuffs, eyelets, hooks.
Skulls bending toward their boutonnieres.

KIM BRIDGFORD

The Standard

O Whitman, it's so hard to make a list –
Not only scrawled reminders – milk and bread –
But one that is, through art, designed to last.

You bore a standard, not inherited,
But democratic, tangled in the grass.
A prophet, you included all the dead

As well as life in motion, fall and kiss,
Soldier and nurse with bandage in between,
The argument and its antithesis.

Compared to you, I find my lists are lean,
Art imitating the impossible.
You catalogued the world that you had seen,

And made it all-embracing in its scrawl.
For you, it must be this, or none at all.

Nibbled to Death by Ducks

They won't leave you alone, but you think this
Is all they'll do to you: a soft distraction
Draining your life. Suction, not satisfaction.
Just one more thing. They are your only business.

Meanwhile the things that matter are now lost,
Your life surrendered to what matters least.
On a far, wide field stands your once-success;

Once, you swam in thoughts of happiness.

You're older now, and also cynical.
It's easy to make fun of those who care.
Your wishes hang on falling stars, your jar
Of insects dead upon the windowsill.

The ducks settle in: they're soft and sweet.
They wear the look of those with plenty to eat.

CONRAD GELLER

Afterwards

Herald, give way, we have no use
for you. Let all announcement cease.
Calm the shouting, introduce
the still machinery of peace.

Tear down the banners, the games are done.
The winner has made his final bow.
Resume subsistence, everyone,
since winning doesn't matter now.

But as for me, though safe ashore,
I sometimes find the silence loud,
the blankets thin, and hear once more
the brief niagara of the crowd,

far in the distance, as I dream,
faint as the gurgle of a stream.

NED BALBO

Servant to an Impulse

A variation on Rimbaud's "La Maline"

I stepped from sunlight into the unknown,
the smell of fruit and spices in the air,
and took a seat, prepared to dine alone,
cut glass arranged on silent furniture.

Slow day, perhaps...Sole guest and occupant,
had I stopped in too early? Suddenly,
a girl walked over as if she were servant
to some impulse she obeyed, and me.

Lighter than air she seemed, though not by much.
She'd brought the menu, opened with a touch,
poured water for my thirst, and turned away.

Was I the only customer that day,
willing to brave the dark and wait for bread,
or just the first? She smiled, and I fed.

DAVID WHIPPMAN

Astounding

Reading my science-fiction magazines,
I felt the walls of my bedroom expand
to the edges of the known universe.
Bikini-clad space lovely in one hand,
ray gun in the other, I faced super-brains,
aliens and robots and much worse.
While back on Earth, unpromising, forlorn,
I'd never left the town where I was born.

Martian princesses trembled at my lust:
real-life earth women viewed me with disdain,
cold to me as the surface of the Moon.
Who cares that Mars is only rock and dust?
I want to read my sci-fi mags again.
I want to go back into space, and soon.

MIGUEL EICHELBERGER

Love At All

Now we're warring and we're laughing,
And the gawkers who are clapping
Are asking of themselves 'what did we miss?'
We're undressing and we're sweating,
And we're falling into getting them
To see between the water and the piss.

Are we lovers who recovered?
Are we gods that can't be bothered?
Is it a miracle that we have come to this?
Is mortality a shiver?
Do we drink to kill the liver?
Does the addict ever tell us that it's bliss?

Do we cling to the insistence
Of a childish resistance,
To the unapologetic law of time?
Do we kiss behind the curtain
So the crowd will be uncertain
If love at all was ever yours or mine

We can't deny the audience
Who pay us with their common cents
And choose between their happiness and wine
Can we deny their vision
Of the smile before collision?
Does the author really need another line?

MARTIN ELSTER

Autumn in New England, 2059

November sixth at Hammonasset strand,
and people in the ocean. Even I,
who hate cold water, swim. The tufted sky,
as hazy as a day in August, sand
and sea and sun, the sound of the surf breaking,
spry seabirds scavenging, the butterflies
and bodies baking, and the gulls' harsh cries
seem distant as the stars from autumn-raking,
which soon will happen on suburban lawns
as surely as the wind produces waves,
as surely as birds migrate and the dawns
grow colder and the bats seek out cool caves.
Yet here I sit now, basking on a beach
and munching, not an apple, but a peach.

JAMES SCANNELL MCCORMICK

Four Orthodox Jews Swimming at Nice

Who so cocky to chance the grim sea that's been
Grinding forever the Côte d'Azur (now gray,
Like sea, like horizon) into loaves of stone?
Teenaged boys. Below the preoccupied *Quai* –

Joggers, mostly, and a clutch of shivery sightseers –
They've defied riptide and hanging rain to lunge,
Naked and whole, into the sullen breakers.
After they towel goose-fleshed thighs and rib cage,

They dress: tallit katan over shoulders
Itchy with salt, kippa pinned and clinging
To sandy scalp. As the others don their trousers,
The nearest skips stones, his tzitzytot swinging.

Tomorrow, the lavender-scented Mistral will blow,
Bending beachwards the palms at L'Hôtel Negresco.

CLAUDIA GARY

Wrong-Way Driver

I. Close Call

Returning home at twilight from the store –
your baby safely strapped into her seat,
the main road not yet widened into four,
then six lanes – in your northbound path you meet
two headlights. Is he crazy? Suicidal?
You swerve onto the shoulder but, for reasons
unknown, you spin around. Your shrill recital
of "No!" explodes the day, the night, the season.

You don't know how you did it, but you land
across the road, turned in the right direction,
stopped on the southbound shoulder. What calm hand
has helped? The baby slumbers in perfection.

Arriving home alarmed, you phone your parents:
You're still alive! The day before, you weren't.

II. Adrenaline Speaks

Here on this shoulder is your place to watch
the wrong-way driver who missed killing you.
Still in his wrong-lane, slow-motion approach,
interior lights all lit, he barrels through
your consciousness again. He can't be real.
He has the spirit of a broken brick
throwing itself against a porcelain wall.
He's grabbed your life and given it a kick.

Was this enough? Is this what was required
to make you value each day as a gift,
or will you linger on, stubbornly mired
in everyday sensation till you drift
downstream leaving no more than alibi?
Here on this shoulder is your place to cry.

Riches

*(Beethoven: Rondo a capriccio in G Major, op. 129,
"Rage over the lost penny")*

Where – where – where – where?
Scurrying around,
scouring until
there on the ground
close to the end
of the last page

he has found it,
has he not?

Where? There,
something is there
brighter than the penny,
richer than the rage.

C.B. ANDERSON

Ellipses

An autopilot does not care
Who wins or loses. Random acts
Of kindness, violence or exclusion
Are nonmaterial artifacts
To stymie those still unaware
That daylight is a cheap illusion.

Wake up, it's said, *the dream is real* –
Unless one knows that he is dreaming
And winds up naked in the dirt
While ancient juggernauts are steaming
To promised lands where time would heal
All body parts that bleed and hurt.

It comes to this: A man might wager
His lovely daughter for a chance
To win a stalwart son. That's fair,
But who will monitor the dance
Where any typical teen-ager
Might sink and not come up for air?

This brings us back to the beginning
Where kids and parents started from
Before the weeping washed away
High-water marks where algal scum
Made clear the level of their sinning.
A landlocked lake does not obey

The moon's command and has no tide
Worth mentioning, whereas the ocean
Accords the moon – a waning sliver
At times – obsequious devotion.
The clearest view of either side
Is from the middle of the river.

MARYANN CORBETT

Schema

It was lovely at first. He was kindness itself on the phone and his beautiful plans had the purity of the sincere, with their well-tempered goals, and their vision so artless and clear that I had to believe, though I thought he should work it alone.

And it worked like a charm. Little envelopes came. They were mailed from that address in Zurich and plump with those generous checks. We were happy, and glory rolled in from one week to the next. And it worked while it worked. It succeeded! At least, till it failed.

The accountant informs me that all of the money's gone west, which is sad, and it sours the taste of a years-long affair. It's a medium-security prison. I write to him there and I miss him, but really, in orange he's not at his best.

CONTRIBUTORS

Gregory Crosby's work has appeared in Court Green, Epiphany, Copper Nickel, Rattle, Leveler and on a bronze plaque in a park in downtown Las Vegas. He used to be an art critic, but then thought better of it.

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 eight books of poetry, including Bully Pulpit, a book of poems on bullying; Epiphanies, a book of religious poems; and the forthcoming Doll. 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.

Conrad Geller has published more than a hundred poems, electronically and in print. His awards include the Charles E. Tuttle Prize, Bibliophilos Prize, and several awards from the Poetry Society of Virginia. A Bostonian, he now lives and writes in Northern Virginia.

Ned Balbo's latest book is The Trials of Edgar Poe and Other Poems (Story Line Press), awarded the 2010 Donald Justice Prize by judge A. E. Stallings, and the 2012 Poets' Prize. His second book, Lives of the Sleepers (University of Notre Dame Press), received the Ernest Sandeen Prize and a ForeWord Book of the Year Gold Medal. Co-winner of the 2013 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, he has additional translations or variations on the work of French- and German-language poets out or forthcoming in Able Muse, Birmingham Poetry Review, Lavender Review, Unsplendid, String Poet, and elsewhere.

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.

Miguel Eichelberger writes out of Vancouver, Canada with his authoress wife. He travels, hits pucks with sticks, kicks balls with feet (soccer and other), and is a happily bewildered father. His work has appeared in the Vancouver Review as issue #27's feature poet, OCW Magazine, Kindling (US), three issues of the Poetic Pinup Revue (US), Existere (Canada), The Resurrectionist (UK), Chrysalis (Canada), Buttontapper Press (US) and is

forthcoming in Bareback (Canada).

Martin Elster lives in West Hartford, CT. His poems have appeared in journals including *Eye to the Telescope*, *Mindflights*, *Thema*, and in the anthologies *Taking Turns: Sonnets from Eratosphere* and *New Sun Rising: Stories for Japan*. His poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Poetry Award.

James Scannell McCormick holds a doctorate in creative writing-poetry from Western Michigan University. His works have appeared in the *Raintree Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and *Third Wednesday*. His poem "Lot (Hermes in Tulips)" was nominated for a 2008 Pushcart Prize; his poem "Trouble" was nominated for a 2009 Pushcart Prize. He currently lives and teaches in Rochester, Minnesota.

Claudia Gary writes, edits, and composes (tonally) in the Washington DC area. Her articles on health have appeared in *The VVA Veteran* and *VFW Magazine*. Her first poetry collection was *Humor Me* (David Robert Books, 2006), and another is in the works. She has been a semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht poetry prize, a finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, a Pushcart Prize nominee, former poetry editor of *Edge City Review*, and a panelist on poetry and music at the West Chester University Poetry Conference. Her poems have recently appeared, or will soon appear, in *American Arts Quarterly*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Antiphon*, *Chronicles*, *First Things*, *Light*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Lucid Rhythms*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Poet Lore*, *String Poet*, *Trinacria*, *Umbrella*, and anthologies including *Villanelles* (Everyman Press, 2012).

C.B. Anderson was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, *The Victory Garden*. In the past ten years hundreds of his poems have appeared in scores of print and electronic journals. His full-length book of poetry, *Mortal Soup and the Blue Yonder*, was published in 2013 by White Violet Press.

Maryann Corbett lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and works for the Minnesota Legislature. She is the author of *Breath Control* (David Robert Books, 2012), which was featured on the first books panel at the West Chester Poetry Conference, and *Credo for the Checkout Line in Winter*, just out from Able Muse Press. She is a past winner of the Lyric Memorial Award and the Willis Barnstone Translation Prize. Her poems, essays, and translations have appeared widely in journals in print and online and in a number of anthologies. New work is forthcoming in *Barrow Street* and *Southwest Review*.