



ISSUE 10
DECEMBER 2013

best dial poems of 2013

www.therotarydial.ca

© 2013, all rights reserved

CONTENTS

Frank Osen

Yards 5

David Rosenthal

From the Bridge on the Estero Trail 6

David Gwilym Anthony

Mother's Day 7

Maryann Corbett

Rethinking Tolkien 8

Charles Martin

A Ballade of Sorts About a Golden Age 9

Kevin O'Shea

Snakes at the Farm 11

Janice D. Soderling

To the Young Woman Leaning at the Bridge Rail 12

Sandra Lloyd

A New Month for Hoping 13

Marybeth Rua-Larsen

Fever Tree 14

Anna M. Evans

Map of Rugeley 15

Kim Bridgford

Inflatable Doll Goes to the Office Christmas Party 16

Inflatable Doll Wants to Go Back to School and Better Herself 17

Inflatable Doll Removes the Mirrors From Her House 18

Melissa Balmain

On Turning 40 19

Time-Lapse 20

Chris O'Carroll

Quark Sestina 21

Barbara Lydecker Crane

Type Cast 23

David M. Harris

Devotion 24

Mary Cresswell

River Road 25

Charles Hughes

Darkness and Dave (Who Lived Down the Street When We Were Boys) 26

The Lapedo Child 27

Anna M. Evans

The Rule Is Not To Besiege a Walled City 28

Sue Kanhai

Here Is Gone 29

Chris O'Carroll

Sexiest Woman Alive 30

Love and Nonsense 31

Ned Balbo

Venetian Courtesan 32

Seth Braver

Chicken Little 33

Charles Hughes

Fall at a Park-Like Rest Stop [2012] 35

Gregory Crosby

Fashion Forward 37

Kim Bridgford

Nibbled to Death by Ducks 38

James Scannell McCormick

Four Orthodox Jews Swimming at Nice 39

Claudia Gary

Wrong-Way Driver 40

Riches 42

Conrad Geller

Structure Words 43

The Aging Rake 44

Jean Free

Love, 1987 45

Bonus Poem 47

Contributors 49

FRANK OSEN

Yards

I knew a man once, who walked off a cliff.
That first night in our starter home, not sleeping –
things needed so much up-, or just safe-keeping –
we seemed to teeter on a steep What-If

the lawn should parch, the plaster crack, walls rot
into their timbers, tumble down? I felt
the tyranny of things our getting got,
was now our lot. Our neighbor wore a belt

of tools, as if to hammer home that fact,
which he did capably, each weekend-long
to sounds of projects driven, nailed and tacked,
or quartered to a table saw's loud song.

We verbed his name. To Trimble: plane a log
for drawer pulls; gild the undersides of eaves;
not merely rake, but marshal all the leaves
and – God! That saw – what's left to saw? The dog?

His calm and measured puttering, not reckless,
appeared designed to make us feel more feckless
in our hilarity of disrepair.
So one day, when he stepped off into air

while hiking, fell partway down a mountainside
and looked up at his daughter with a laugh,
and then (unused to doing things by half,
perhaps) rolled down the rest of it and died,

it seemed as if he'd planned and built a way
as sure as with an augur and a gauge,
to show how he could, on a Saturday,
do what might take some people half an age.

DAVID ROSENTHAL

From the Bridge on the Estero Trail

Point Reyes, California

Before we came here, someone built this bridge,
and cut the trail that winds around the arm
of Drake's Estero, climbing to the ridge
above the beds of Johnson's Oyster Farm.
They set the trailhead near a young pine grove
that started as the remnants of a failed
Christmas tree farm. Before that, in the cove
north of the trail, the butter boats once sailed
from Shafter's Ranch, unfazed by shipwrecked ghosts
who littered Limantour with sinking layers
of tattered sails and broken planks and posts,
long after Drake himself stopped for repairs.

When Drake arrived, the Miwoks had been here
for centuries, with camps a few miles east –
supplies of oysters, mussels, rock crab, deer,
jackrabbits, quail, and berries never ceased,
as bobcats, hawks, and vultures knew quite well,
before the camps or ships were ever built.
Even the mice found food in trees that fell,
and sandpipers dug insects from the silt
of falling tides, the way they're digging here,
where ebbs from the Estero and beyond
cause Home Bay's mounds of mud to reappear,
and draw the stream beneath us from Home Pond.

We steal ourselves a quick, wind-huddled kiss
against the rail, then watch the fading flow
of vastness trickling past the rocks below,
and someone says *the moon is doing this*.

DAVID GWILYM ANTHONY

Mother's Day

I hold the phone remembering –
no need to call today.

Routine's my life raft; as I cling
I hold the phone, remembering
a loss. It is a cruel thing,
this trick the mind can play.

I hold the phone, remembering.
No need to call today.

MARYANN CORBETT

Rethinking Tolkien

Be honest, now: What you ached for, young,
with your head down over dusty volumes,
was spell and enchantment, charms and secrets.
These lines, so old, so broken open,
so groaned over, the grave books gaping
dried-up bones out of Bosworth-Toller
that you fumble and prod to fashion flesh for –
all half-measures. All means to the end
of the magic words in the mind of the wizard
who knitted a time out of new-made tongues.
Think of him, then, in his thinned age,
in the oak pew, bent on his ashplant,
the people around him mouthing plain English
while he barked aloud the abandoned Latin,
the last sounds left him here, *sub luna*,
that spoke the dream of a different world.

CHARLES MARTIN

A Ballade of Sorts About a Golden Age

For Michael Dunne

Somewhere between polishing off a bowl of fried to order pork rinds at La Bête in Seattle and downing handfuls of popcorn dusted with apple-cider powder at Barbuzzo in Philadelphia, it hit me: We're living in a golden age of bar snacks.

– Bon Appétit, September, 2011

Though there are many whom we do not know
Starving to death in places more than cruel,
Where babies die and children do not grow;
Though there are those who spend their lives immured
In darkness living – so to speak – on gruel,
It doesn't matter, for we here are assured
Of better grub by far than wormy hardtack:
We live in a golden age of the bar snack.

If icebergs melt and ocean levels rise,
If more of us can scarcely breathe the air,
And Gaia offers us a grim surprise
As water gushes from our taps afire,
Yet let me counsel here against despair:
Although the situation may seem dire,
We'll learn to love the heat that melts the tarmac,
Who live in a golden age of the bar snack.

If mindless terrorism north and south
Turns distant nations into living hell
And makes of many one blind screaming mouth,
That isn't really our problem, see?
Some of us live poorly, some live well,
And that's been true throughout all history,

Although you search no matter how far back.
We live in a golden age of the bar snack.

O Prince, no matter whether you prefer
The honeyed almonds or a lightly grilled
Dormouse served up within or out its fur,
Your prairie oysters raw, your Arctic char black,
Know that your wish will surely be fulfilled:
We live in a golden age of the bar snack.

KEVIN O'SHEA

Snakes at the Farm

On a log soggy with mushrooms like ears
a copperhead lay sunning, till our sound
drained off into the leaves that rot to dirt.

Looking for snakes, I found one in the dirt.
Swallows were hunting flies above the ears
of corn, which grow to keep the family sound.

Grandpa said, "See that snake. Don't make a sound."
I slipped my boots into the plowed-up dirt
to chase the coiled snake. It hissed in my ears,

a dead sound, as if ears had filled with dirt.

JANICE D. SODERLING

To the Young Woman Leaning at the Bridge Rail

This river flows for its own sake,
playing peek-a-boo with bones. It goes
about its business calmly. Your heartache
does not distract it, my wan cabbage rose.

You seek its gravelly bed for soft repose?
This river flows for its own sake,
not yours. It never stops or slows
when love and parties slow and stop. To take

a bite of stolen bike or bridal cake
or your sweet liver and a slice of nose,
this river flows. For its own sake,
not yours. Leeches and hungry minnows

feed here too, like wedding guests. Who knows
or cares what lies around the bend to take
a bloated thing in pantyhose.
For its own sake. This river flows.

SANDRA LLOYD

A New Month for Hoping

April is a month like any other.
Certainly no crueller than August, say.
Time's a semantic matter, another
kind of trial, and distracting day to day.
Knowing I am but summer to your heart,
I'll test this logic out: if $1 + 1$
 $= 1$, this you-and-me truth (in part)
makes me wonder if, in the long run,
there is purpose in dark November skies,
when I'm calmed by your words, and your silence.
I ask: Do we love? Or will our demise
in winter mean that no good time makes sense
for promises? The answer is very
clear: I might wait here 'til Neverary.

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

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.

MELISSA BALMAIN

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.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Quark Sestina

Physicists have identified six “flavors” or varieties of quarks: up, down, charm, strange, top, bottom.

Some particles or pulses that make up
Our atoms are themselves made up of strange
Snippets of spin. (Not spinning like a top,
More like a mind that can't get to the bottom
Of substance conjured by some cosmic charm
From flickering flecks of charge.) What ties down

These fragments? Makes them matter? Fluffy down,
Dense diamond – it's all mist, does not fill up
The space it seems to occupy. What charm
Binds almost nothingness into a strange
Simulation of something? We, at bottom,
Are emptiness with a veneer on top.

Yet oh how real we feel when you're on top
(Or I am, either way). And going down
Makes every pulsing particle from bottom
To top again and again ante up
For matter's realest deal. Eventful, strange,
Almost not here at all, flesh works a charm

That voids the void. Your body's urgent charm
May be a tactile truth layered atop
A tenuous one. We may be as strange
As we are familiar. When we get down
To business, we may have no clue what's up
Inside the atoms of tongue, breast, bottom,

Or any part. When we say “from the bottom
Of my heart,” we name a place with real charm
But not a real locale. And what wells up

From that place carries us over the top
Of something that has no real up or down,
No here or there. For love is just as strange

As mostly insubstantial substance, strange
As immaterial matter. Bottom
Line, this flesh in which two lovers lie down
Is no more and no less real than this charm
The cosmos whispers at the top
Of its voice: "All quarks, all love, all made up."

To be unreal yet real has the strange charm
Of spin and tumble from bottom to top.
Quark me good, babe. Quark me down. Quark me up.

BARBARA LYDECKER CRANE

Type Cast

TIMES ROMAN considers himself a font
of wisdom, always running ragged, right
and left. He parses speech in sound bites
practiced nightly to his confidante,

PERPETUA TITLING, his golden trophy wife.
Ahead of herself in planning domestic expansion,
Perpetua feels she was born to a capitol mansion.
She's never seen in print with lowercase life.

Chapter and verse, the family's a volume of tension.
SHADOW GOTHIC, face as white as bone,
is seeking work engraving burial stone.
His darker penchants best remain unmentioned.

An artsy type, AVANT GARDE is known
for tattooing haiku all over her limbs and head.
Her blue-tinged skin makes Father Times turn red;
she's hardly his ideal of a Roman clone.

STENCIL might be lurking in the shed
amid his stash of spray guns, paint and chalk.
Darting city margins, he's a nighthawk
scrawling walls with F-bombs and Drop Dead.

Here comes the youngest, babbling baby talk
and waving to the crowd. FUTURA toddles,
adoring eyes on Daddy Times, her model
for learning all the ropes of type-walk.

DAVID M. HARRIS

Devotion

Behind the pews, the cantor calls,
a solo voice for once; no chord
or chorus this day in this hall.

Hineni: Here I stand, O Lord.

He sings his prayer on our behalf
on Yom Kippur. He leads us toward
our comfort with the rod and staff.

Hineni: Here I stand, O Lord.

My disbelief won't matter here.
The cantor's faith is my reward.
It means to last me through the year.

Hineni: Here I stand, O Lord.

But after services I leave,
break fast, regain my disaccord.
Uplifted, still I don't believe.

Hineni: Here I stand, O Lord.

MARY CRESSWELL

River Road

As the tree's inclined, so our thoughts were bent
by rough, competing breezes, unusually unseen

but no less strait for all that. The last
hard skew came from the east and seemed to last

forever. Then the wind changed, as is its wont,
and from disparate branches, twigs were seen

sprouting at cross-purposes, angled, when seen
from here, down into the river. But the last

twigs went with the flow (as we say), ocean-bent:
bent sticks in water, seen as whole at last.

CHARLES HUGHES

Darkness and Dave (Who Lived Down the Street When We Were Boys)

Her husband beat her now and then –
And, then, more frequently.
But once black eyes had multiplied
So no one didn't see,
She waited till a night when he'd drawn blood.
The cops did what they could.

They clubbed him a few times before
Dropping him in a cell.
He slept, practically comatose,
For days but woke to tell
The judge how he'd been hit at Anzio,
How friend turned sudden foe.

Too sick for jail, the judge decided,
And sentenced him instead
To the state mental hospital.
In three weeks, he was dead,
Leaving his wife an old white house and a son.
At twelve, Dave was the one

Who found him hanging by his belt.
I'd say that's probably why
Dave played these angry, solo games
Like *making gopher pie* –
Dave, decked out in his father's boots and hat,
Stomped gophers, mashing them flat.

It's probably why Dave fished a spot
Where woods and river met.
The water there held darkness and light,
Each perfectly offset.
He'd pull fish up into the shade, then dig
Their eyes out with a twig.

The Lapedo Child

[Whose remains were discovered in 1998 in the Lapedo Valley in central Portugal]

His bones are red. That drew me in among
The published facts and educated guesses:
Male, four years old at death; the burial some
Twenty-four thousand years ago and done
Carefully (tenderly might be more apt);
Head slightly raised, feet crossed, his left foot on
His right, a snail-shell pendant at his neck
(A name tag? Toy? Or maybe a holy vessel?);
And for a shroud an animal skin his people,
As if to register indelible grief,
Reddened with ochre, pigment that would bleed
And bleed all the long while the shroud decayed.

The find is interesting to scholars who
(Because his skeleton is early modern,
But with Neanderthal-like legs and jaw)
Say he's a puzzle piece, that he shows how
Much different lines combined to make the species
The well-stirred mixture we are now.

I see

Him less as scientific evidence
And more as an every-child, a hybrid, yes,
Touched by the double stain of love and sorrow,
Which travels like a family chin and – in
The inexplicable providence of God –
Spreads from each generation to the next.

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.

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.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Sexiest Woman Alive

I think the risk of being the sexiest woman alive is that you don't want to ever have sex again.

– Kate Beckinsale

That's how the star reacted when *Esquire*
Named her the world's prime object of desire.

In the event you feel likewise, I ought
To hasten to assure you that you're not.

(It wouldn't be the first time that a guy
Had angled for some action with a lie.)

Or maybe, to incline you toward congress,
I'll say you are, but not inform the press,

The better to enjoy in blissful privacy
All of your sexiest woman alivecy.

Love and Nonsense

You gimble with my vorpal blade,
I gyre in your wabe.
I whiffle tulgey coinages
For such a frabjous babe.

'Tis brillig and my love's unhinged
In uffish consequence.
My tangled tongue is burbling you
With words that make no sense.

Callooh! Callay! I want to say.
I'm beamish that you're mine.
My borogoves are mimsy
And my heart is on the line.

NED BALBO

Venetian Courtesan

A variation on Rilke's "Die Kurtisane"

It's almost as if Venice knows a secret
alchemists once knew: how any substance –
hair or skin or lips – beneath the sun's
gaze turns to gold. You touched that secret, once,

and can't let go. I wish you *could* forget,
but you're one more who can't survive the night
unless he finds some bridge from dark to light
over the dim canals, the rising tide

that drowns or bears us homeward...This dog I walk
I sleep with, too: his presence comforts me,
as love and strangers' company do not,

though, yes, I occupy your every thought,
or so you claim... I smile occasionally –

How much more dangerous it is to talk.

SETH BRAVER

Chicken Little

The storm-cock knows
That when he crows,
The dormant world's machinery
Must needs obey,
Bring forth the day,
And reconstruct the scenery.

Thus from the height
Of his proud perch,
The rooster crew
Unto his church:

COCK-COCK-A-DOO !!

And there was light.

COCK-COCK-A-DOO !!

Yes, I hear you.
Jesus, what an
Awful sound!

Zip, then button,
Loop around
The belt, then fix it.
Wake and stumble,
Dress and mumble
Imprecations.

COCK-A-DOO !!

Ipse dixit!

Patience, patience.
(Where's that sock?!)

Patience, peace:
The goading cock
Will soon release
You. All will cease
At Ragnarok.

CHARLES HUGHES

**Fall at a Park-Like Rest Stop
[2012]**

An hour by interstate west of La Crosse.
October leaves burn in the trees, burn out,
And drop – then gutter in their own dry streams,
In windblown rivulets that make us pause.
The early fall recalls the summer's drought
I've come close to forgetting. Now it seems

Stiffening leaves flow past our feet like clues
Of interest to an archaeologist
Or like a hemorrhage a doctor sees
Diagnostically as something he can use,
A road map leading to a ruptured cyst,
Let's say, itself perhaps spawned by disease,

A cancer. So inductive logic goes,
By reasoned steps, toward the incurable:
Pottery shards to settlements; from there
To a lost city, which in turn will pose
The further question why it fell at all –
War, famine, plague? Or climate change? That scare,

The last – the sunlit leaves falling too soon
After a too hot summer couldn't rain –
Given the well-known wounds to earth and sky –
That scare is scaring me this afternoon.
It's therefore a relief when we again
Climb in the car, despite the silence. I

Can't help but be a little curious.
(Often what one has seen the other saw,
And thoughts – some thoughts – speak up unsaid.) I say
She's taking stock: there are the two of us;

We have two sons; we have two daughters-in-law;
We also have a grandchild on the way.

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 boutonnières.

KIM BRIDGFORD

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.

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.

CONRAD GELLER

Structure Words

The way from When to Now is never straight
but crooked, narrow, dangerous, immense,
its perils not apparent to the sense,
with fearful consequence for coming late,
with no important treasure to defend,
and only stale provision at the end.

Faint lines connect the space from What to This,
from Why to But to Yes, from Where to Near.
Lines barely designate Away from Here,
or tell me how to find a turn I miss.
The schedule shows a prospect, How to Deed.
The path is marked, but not so I can read.

A boy stands on a spit above the sea
that stops his passage to another side
where, he is certain, lovely girls abide
and lemonade and licorice are free.
He lingers while the minutes fade away,
and slowly, surely, comfortable decay.

The Aging Rake

I have dallied, once or twice,
with eager girls all sweets and spice,
flighty girls who would not stay,
timid girls who pulled away
and angry girls who had their say.

I never reckoned what it cost.
A smile, a kiss, and all was lost.
I love them still, although it hurts,
the proper ladies and the flirts,
those girls in jeans, those girls in skirts.

So boys, take warning from my tale:
a smile, a kiss will not prevail.
Cleave to one who's kind and smart,
who'll make your bed and take your part,
and tether her to your wild heart.

JEAN FREE

Love, 1987

I guess when school is over
we'll let this love thing die –
its nature flips direction,
intentions go awry.

I'll love you till the black
on my nails begins to chip,
till the zipper on your ripped up
jeans just won't unzip.

I'll love you till the mix-
tape that you made for me
unwinds and melts and Memorex
fades into memory.

Till the sordid notes I folded
become something that you store
with family Polaroids
in your bedroom's catch-all drawer.

But twenty years from now
you'll find me on the screen
we practice typing on,
and tell me at fifteen

you didn't know adulthood
was hitched to emptiness.
You'll Instagram old photos
and voicelessly confess

that everything you are
is tied to who we were,
the things we thought were fads
rebelliously recur.

You didn't know that love
would not grow up, but fight,
like a die-hard aging punk
who sticks around for spite.

BONUS POEM

Not yet published when we were making our selections, and so technically not in the running for our best of issue, this one nevertheless seemed like a good finale.

Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night,

The Dial

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Ho, Ho, Ho

(for TH)

Some things are hard to draw a picture of,
And so important that we always try.
A woman holding scales is Justice. Love
Is arrows from a small boy flying by.
A jolly saint or elf in fur-trimmed red –
A few years back, he was the Christmas Eve
Vision that you had dancing in your head.
This year, you have a new way to believe
In everything that figure signifies
For younger children. Now your love is part
Of all the stories glowing in their eyes
This flying reindeer season. It's your heart
That helps make Santa's magic real, you know.
You are a celebration. Ho, ho, ho!

CONTRIBUTORS

Frank Osen's first book, *Virtue, Big as Sin*, was awarded the 2012 Able Muse Book prize by Mary Jo Salter and was published by that press in 2013. His poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Verse Daily*, *The American Arts Quarterly*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and Ted Kooser's "American Life in Poetry." He has won the Best American Poetry series poem award, and been a finalist in the Howard Nemerov, Morton Marr, *Writers Digest*, and Able Muse competitions and has been nominated for a Pushcart prize.

David Rosenthal lives in Berkeley, California with his wife and two daughters. He is an elementary school teacher in the Oakland Unified School District. His debut collection, *The Wild Geography of Misplaced Things*, was released by White Violet Press last May. His poems and translations have appeared in print and online in *Rattle*, *Raintown Review*, *Measure*, *Unsplendid*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Umbrella*, and many other journals. He has been a Pushcart Prize Nominee and a Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award Finalist. He is the founder and host of First Wednesday Formal, a monthly poetry reading series in Albany, California.

David Gwilym Anthony was born in Ffestiniog, North Wales, brought up in Hull and educated at Hull Grammar School before going on to study modern history at St Catherine's College, Oxford. He is the author of *Words to Say* (2002), *Talking to Lord Newborough* (2004) and *Passing Through Woods* (2012), and his work has appeared worldwide in journals in print and online. He currently lives with his wife in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, where he works as chairman of a financial services company and as a councillor on South Bucks District Council.

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.

Charles Martin's most recent books are *Signs & Wonders*, a collection of poems published in 2011 by The Johns Hopkins University Press, and *The Bhagavad Gita*, a collaborative translation with Gavin Flood, brought out by W.W. Norton & Co. in 2012. Southwest Review will soon be publishing an essay of his entitled *Is There a Plot in This Poem?* and a review-essay called *Whose Salinger?* will appear in the winter issue of *The Hudson Review*.

Kevin O'Shea is currently completing Western Colorado State University's MFA in poetry with an emphasis on versecraft. Since graduating from The College of New Jersey in 2007, he has studied poetry at New York's 92nd Street Y Unterberg Poetry Center and at the West Chester Poetry Conference. His work has appeared in *The New Criterion*. He lives in Lambertville, New Jersey.

Janice D. Soderling's poetry, fiction and translations appear in many international journals. In the past three years, she has been featured or invited reader at The Troubadour (London) for Magma Poetry, at the Rattle Reading Series and First Wednesday Formal Readings (both California) and at The Athens Center 2013 Workshop Readings led by Alicia Stallings (Greece). Rattle invited her to participate in a Transatlantic Poetry on Air production in December 2013. Janice has had a first prize story and several finalist dittos at Glimmer Train Stories and a Best-of-Volume poem at Blue Unicorn. She is assistant fiction editor for US-based Able Muse, and newly appointed poetry editor at Frostwriting, a European literary journal. Her work has been selected for American and Swedish anthologies. Janice hails from the US, but lives in Sweden.

Sandra Lloyd received a Bachelor of Science degree from U of T, a Nursing Diploma from Humber College and is currently pursuing a Masters in the Field of Creative Writing at U of T. Her prose and poetry have appeared in publications including *The Antigonish Review*, *The Windsor Review*, *Other*

Voices and The Puritan online. 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.

Marybeth Rua-Larsen lives on the south coast of Massachusetts and teaches part-time at Bristol Community College. Her poems, essays, flash fiction and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in The Raintown Review, Angle, Cleaver, The Poetry Bus and Free Inquiry. She won in the Poetry category for the 2011 Over the Edge New Writer of the Year Competition in Galway, Ireland and her chapbook Nothing In Between will be published by Barefoot Muse Press in 2014.

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.

Melissa Balmain's forthcoming poetry collection, *Walking in on People*, may make readers think twice about having her as a houseguest. It was chosen by X.J. Kennedy as the winner of the 2013 Able Muse Book Award and will be published in 2014 by Able Muse Press. Balmain is the editor of *Light* (formerly *Light Quarterly*), a light-verse journal that recently moved online. When she's not eking out poems or editing, she teaches in the English Department at the University of Rochester and writes nonfiction. Her essays, articles, and humor pieces have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *McSweeney's*, and *Success*, where she is a columnist.

Chris O'Carroll is a writer and an actor. His poems have appeared in *Angle*, *14 by 14*, *Light*, *Literary Review*, *Snakeskin*, and other print and online journals, and in the anthologies *The Best of the Barefoot Muse* and *20 Years at the Cantab Lounge*.

Barbara Lydecker Crane is the author of two chapbooks: *Zero Gravititas* (White Violet Press, 2012) and *Alphabetricks* (for children, Daffydowndilly Books, 2013). She won the 2011 Helen Schaible International Sonnet Contest and has been nominated for a Pushcart. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Arts Quarterly*, *Angle*, *Atlanta Review*, *First Things*, *The Flea*, *Light Quarterly*, *Magma Poetry*, *Measure*, *14 by 14*, and in seven anthologies. A member of the Powow River Poets, she lives with her husband near Boston.

David M. Harris is originally a New Yorker, now living in Tennessee. His M.F.A. is in fiction, and most of his poetry is free verse, but occasionally something more formal squeezes itself out. His collection, *The Review Mirror*, was published this year by Unsolicited Press.

Mary Cresswell came from California to Wellington, New Zealand, in 1970. After retiring from life as an editor in various government offices, she took to using her own words and now writes poetry. Her third book, *Trace Fossils*, was published in 2011.

Charles Hughes is a tutor at St. Leonard's House in Chicago and a retired lawyer. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America*, *Angle*, *The Anglican Theological Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *First Things*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *The Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Measure*, *The Sewanee Theological Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and other publications. He lives in the Chicago area with his wife.

Sue Kanhai is a Toronto-based freelance writer. She 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, where her poetry manuscript was shortlisted for the 2013 Marina Nemat Award. Her poems have appeared in the *Ottawa Arts Review*, *The Binnacle*, and the anthology *Desperately Seeking Susans*.

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.

Seth Braver lives in Olympia, Washington with his wife and two basset hounds. He has, with the publication of “Chicken Little” in this very issue, fulfilled an unwitting prophecy of A. E. Housman (see A Shropshire Lad, X, lines 5-6). His poetry has previously appeared in Angle, Kin, Umbrella, Snakeskin, The Centrifugal Eye, Four and Twenty and Elohi Gadugi.

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.

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, sings, and composes (tonally) near Washington DC. A 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize and past finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, she is author of Humor Me (David Robert Books 2006) and several chapbooks. Her poems appear in Forgetting Home (Barefoot Muse Press 2013) and Villanelles (Everyman Press 2012), as well as numerous journals. She also writes articles on health for The VVA Veteran and other magazines. "Wrong-Way Driver" is from a forthcoming narrative sonnet sequence.

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.

Jean Free earned an MA in Poetry at Johns Hopkins University where she also works. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in The Little Patuxent Review, The Raintown Review, The Innisfree Poetry Journal, Lines

+ Stars, and Free State Review. Her unpublished chapbook was a semi-finalist in the 2013 Barefoot Muse Chapbook Competition.