

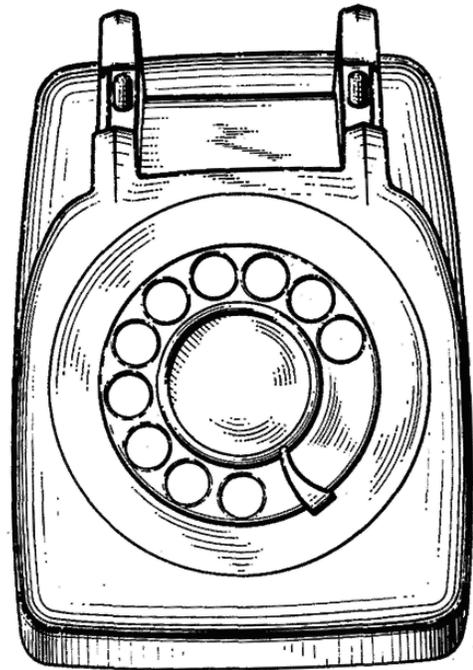
# THE ROTARY DIAL

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Alexandra Oliver, Editor

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FIG. 1



## CONTENTS

**Charles Martin**

A Ballade of Sorts About a Golden Age 3

**Kevin O'Shea**

Snakes at the Farm 5

**Jennifer Reeser**

The Lalaurie Horror: Canto XI 6

**George Freek**

For Todd Moore 8

**Jim Burrows**

Them 9

**Miguel Eichelberger**

First Night Stand 10

**Phillip Crymble**

Canopy 12

**Julie Kane**

Toast 13

**Mark Blauer**

Another on the Loose 14

**Quincy R. Lehr**

Climb Mount Niitaka 15

**Janice Soderling**

To the Young Woman Leaning at the Bridge Rail 16

**Sandra Lloyd**

A New Month for Hoping 17

Contributors 18

CHARLES MARTIN

## **A Ballade of Sorts About a Golden Age**

For Michael Donne

“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.

JENNIFER REESER

## **The Lalaurie Horror: Canto VI**

Entrance aglow, the phantom swiftly led  
away, as I attempted to keep pace,  
and heard our tour guide fading, as he said,

"Although we have no photographic trace  
to prove the legend, it is claimed Delphine –  
being a lady beautiful of face –

attracted the attention of the queen  
of Spain, who granted her her heart's desire  
upon the very moment she was seen,

when yet a teen." I thought: How strange, the fire  
does not consume air, wood, palm, wall, nor fern.  
What could this freak phenomenon require?

He finished, while I watched the mansion burn,  
marvelling at the dearth of dropping jaws,  
and drama none seemed able to discern.

His pause became a belletristic pause.  
"Twice widowed, with one husband lost at sea,  
the second husband by some unknown cause,

still a great beauty she was said to be.  
By most accounts, a mannequin of poise  
and charm, who kept polite society.

And while she was not beautiful as Troy's  
reputed beauty, yet, hers was enough  
to quell malicious rumors of the noise

emitting from these rooms. Rich charm can bluff  
its way out of a scandal, with aplomb."  
Suddenly, the road below turned rough.

"A charge of slave abuse against Madame  
was filed, her home and regimen exposed  
to an investigation." Like a bomb

or rocket from the flames returned my "ghost."  
And like a soldier in a southern trench,  
I took the shelling. "What a lovely host

I am," she drawled, in such proficient French,  
it startled – proper, formal and complete,  
her exhalations reeking with the stench

of sulfur. "Grace can optimize deceit,"  
our guide forged on, "The formal charge was dropped."  
Grout and unlevel rock replaced the street.

Before, plain asphalt pavement, flat, blacktopped  
and smooth, it now was made of ballast stone  
inlaid like diamond steps. Our tour guide mopped

his beaded forehead, pulled a mobile phone  
which rang within the pocket, from his hip,  
answered the caller loudly, with a groan

theatrical and humble, both, his lip  
affecting pique: "I told you not to call  
me ever when I'm working." With a flip,

he cut the speaker short, and drew up tall,  
regained his former, scholarly composure.  
"Sorry about the interruption, y'all..."

Some photographs result in an exposure  
with greenish orbs." He winked, as though in jest.  
"They commonly precede a bank foreclosure."

The ghost spoke. "How appropriately dressed  
you are, chérie – such cheerful use of blacks.  
The door has opened. Will you be my guest?"

The street had now developed streetcar tracks,  
innate as veins along the facing block.  
"Let us escape this herd of thirsty yaks,

and this malfeasant, gurgling prairie cock,  
picking at lies like flies upon their backs.  
Come – smell my sweet bouquets of crimson stock,  
my sprays of pomegranate four o'clock."

GEORGE FREEK

**For Todd Moore**

Four horses roam  
this dark, lonely street.  
I don't think they're searching  
for something to eat.

The moonlight is fatal.  
The wind is bare. Crows  
have eyes like stilettos,  
but nothing is there.

A rocking-horse bad man  
with a soft rubber gun.  
This was your life.  
Perhaps it was fun.

JIM BURROWS

**Them**

After the break-up,  
they were determined  
to be serious  
about something else.

Bring on the brass tacks,  
the nitty-gritty,  
to hell with all that  
sugarcoated stuff.

Now they understood  
how people could live  
alone on mountains  
pushing the treeline.

War correspondents  
and Sister O'Neil  
were never so real  
as they were back then.

But as for themselves,  
the heart would come back  
(they counted on that),  
but only for scraps,

and by then they'd know  
the wheat from the chaff,  
the gold from the ore,  
the lesson from life.

As if they could trade  
that first illusion  
for another one  
of their own making.

As if they could die  
in their own sweet time,  
a little each day  
and never again.

MIGUEL EICHELBERGER

### **First Night Stand**

Evening.

“Relax” she says “and realize  
you never were a teacher.  
At best you were an altar boy  
At worst you were a preacher.”

“So then lover which am I  
And what are you for knowing?”  
“You’re as foolish as you ever were  
and what I am is going.”

“I wish you wouldn’t leave so soon  
I’d like to get to know you.  
I only know you don’t like Jazz  
You don’t like how I love you.”

“You know all you need to know  
I wasn’t at my best  
And despite your claim before we came  
I think you need the rest

So don’t ask silly questions, man  
Tonight was not the best  
But you’re no choirboy anymore  
And I think you need the rest.”

Morning.

I think I lost your number  
And I’m sure I lost your face.  
And when I started looking,  
Love, I found your sodden grace.

And now the fool will realize  
The cruelty of this pace  
That the manic want for seeking  
Shows its violence in his haste.

So the filth left from the evening  
Finds no cleansing in embrace  
And the emptiness he's feeling  
Found no solace in the chase.

The morning wasn't pretty, love  
Not in this little place.  
And this vacant ringing bedroom  
Won't forgive the aftertaste.

The cab ride lost your number  
And the red wine lost your face  
But I have no need for searching,  
Love, you left your ruined lace.

PHILLIP CRYMBLE

### **Canopy**

I've come for painter's tape and spackle, drop sheets, putty knives. Your list, unopened in my hand, I start to search the aisles for what we need. Frank address in public places often takes me by surprise. And yet the voice that calls my name among the stacks of housewares is uncertain, shy. To meet in such a place seems so unlikely, but I recognize the man at once – he's here for plastic pipe. The canopy he hopes to build is crudely diagrammed – a wedding in the woods, the lightweight PVC ideal for travel, quick assembly. Funny how the world reveals the makings of our lives.

JULIE KANE

**Toast**

Here's to our friend from work,  
Promoted to a jerk.

MARK BLAUER

**Another on the Loose**

Born white in L.A., in an obstetric ward,  
he's proud to wear a Plains-style headdress, chant,  
and gather more disciples to his tribe  
like eagle feathers trafficked on the sly

or even budgie feathers. Either way,  
he says his people are real Indians  
with sobriquets he formalized: Sharp Hair,  
Nice Butterfly, and Iridescent Girl.

He argues they were loud for generations  
prior to Cassidy, LaRue, or Mix.  
Ancestors, he explains, would yell a warning  
in an aspen-wooded amphitheater,

then spark a flint to burn the underbrush.  
Nowadays, he chuckles, there's no need  
to strike a match or flick some butane lighter.  
According to this sage, all ancient flame

evolved to Spirit. Turns out he's Sedona-  
certified to sense, placate, and use  
incendiary life. Therefore, the crowd  
is safe when he shouts "Fire!" from one aisle

of the multiplex at Sylvan Acres Mall,  
and it's wrong to persecute his gentle faith,  
especially with everybody hot  
to catch a midnight showing of Billy Jack.

QUINCY R. LEHR

**Climb Mount Niitaka**

It started as a blip, with scores of engines,  
a constant, whirring blade, but multiplied.  
Red sun and yellow blood, drawn by sounds  
of all-night radio – a retribution,  
shrapnel of industry raining down,  
another in a series of infamies,  
a gambit coming from the wrong direction.  
It's good guys, bad guys, greatest generations,  
the lurid stuff of propaganda posters  
lit by a molten shower of fire and lead,  
the stratagems and counter-stratagems  
of empire and empire, things that we believe  
because we hit back harder.

A cryptic whisper  
crackles across the waves like poetry  
or like a Zero's guns. "Climb Mount Niitaka...."

JANICE 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 crueler 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.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**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.

**Kevin O'Shea** will begin studies this summer at Western Colorado State University's low-residency MFA. Since graduating from The College of New Jersey in 2007, he has studied poetry at New York's 92<sup>nd</sup> 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.

**Jennifer Reeser** is the author of three full-length collections: *An Alabaster Flask*, winner of the Word Press First Book Prize, *Winterproof*, and *Sonnets from the Dark Lady and Other Poems*. Her poems and translations of French and Russian literature appear in periodicals such as *POETRY*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Formalist*, *MEASURE*, *Light Quarterly* and *Able Muse*. Her work also has been widely anthologized in books including Longman's *Introduction to Poetry*, edited by Dana Gioia and X.J. Kennedy, *Poets Translate Poets: A Hudson Review Anthology*, and *Phoenix Rising: The Next Generation of American Formal Poets*.

She has received awards from The World Order of Narrative and Formalist Poets, and from *The Lyric*. She is the former editor of *Iambs and Trochees*, and a mentor on faculty with the West Chester Poetry Conference. She lives in southern Louisiana with her husband, fiction writer Jason Reeser, and their children. Her website is located at [jenniferreeser.com](http://jenniferreeser.com).

**George Freek** is a poet/playwright living in Belvidere, IL. His poems have recently appeared in *The Missing Slate*, *The Bone Parade*, *Epiphany Magazine*, *The Oklahoma Review*, *The Poydras Review*, and *The Empirical Review*. His plays have recently been produced by The Auburn Players (NY) Community Theatre, The Lee Street Theatre (NC), The Gaspape Theatre (PA), The Complete Theatre Company (NYC) and the Townsville Community Theatre (Australia).

**Jim Burrows** is a real estate appraiser in Cordell, Oklahoma, a town of about three thousand people in the western part of the state. His work has appeared in *32 Poems*, *The Raintown Review*, *Passages North*, and other journals, and is forthcoming in *Measure and Angle*.

**Miguel Eichelberger** writes out of Vancouver, Canada with his authoress wife. His work has appeared in the Vancouver Review (Canada) as issue #27's feature poet, OCW Magazine (Canada), Kindling (US), three issues of the Poetic Pinup Revue (US), Existere (Canada), The Resurrectionist (UK), Chrysalis (Canada), Buttontapper (US), Bareback (Canada) and is forthcoming in San Diego State University's pacificREVIEW, and Indiana University's From The Well House.

**Phillip Crymble's** poems have appeared in The Malahat Review, Arc, Vallum, Literary Review of Canada, CV2, The New Quarterly, Riddle Fence, The Hollins Critic, Poetry Ireland Review, and numerous other publications worldwide. A naturalized Canadian born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, he lives and writes in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where he serves as a poetry editor for The Fiddlehead. Not Even Laughter, his first full-length collection, will be published by Salmon Poetry, Ireland, later this year.

**Julie Kane** is the 2011-2013 Louisiana State Poet Laureate. Her two most recent poetry collections are Jazz Funeral (2009), the winner of the Donald Justice Prize, and Rhythm & Booze (2003), a National Poetry Series winner and Poets' Prize finalist. Her work has been featured on Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, and The Writer's Almanac, and in journals such as The Antioch Review, Barrow Street, Prairie Schooner, Rattle, and The Southern Review. She teaches at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, USA, and on the faculty of the West Chester University Poetry Conference.

**Mark Blauer's** poems and translations have appeared in several dozen journals, including Angle, Blue Unicorn, The Dark Horse, Nimrod, Verse Wisconsin, and The Windsor Review. He lives about ten miles outside Hot Springs, Arkansas.

**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.

**Janice D. Soderling** writes poetry, fiction and flash, translates poetry and writes for the stage. In Canada, her work has appeared at venues such as The Malahat Review, The Fiddlehead, Event, ditch, and is included in the 5-year anthology recently released by The Centrifugal Eye. An ekphrasis is forthcoming at American Arts Quarterly; a villanelle is nominated by Tilt-a-

Whirl to Best-of-the-Net 2012. Janice is assistant fiction editor at Able Muse.

**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.