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MICHAEL FERRIS

Walt Whitman

What indeed is finally beautiful except death and love?

He lived in delight and joy
as a great fish inhabits the sea.
He didn't take the blue for granted,
wetness was itself the miracle,
and wave on wave came ecstasy.

It's not that he knew no drought:
incomprehension, obloquy,
the banal press of circumstance,
the shipwreck of loved ones,
war's filth and failed romance;

but he overcame them all
with his titanic, his pelagic will –
he sounded the abyss
and surfaced again somehow
in circumambient bliss.

Be warned, O August gawkers,
all toe-dippers on the sand:
no man gains the deep vision,
the unfoundering heart, unless
he once forsakes the land.

JANE BLANCHARD

Nevertheless

Day stirs as usual: first coffee or
a cola with the headlines on the Web,
next email, messages, some comics, more
caffeine, a game. When darkness starts to ebb,
we head outside to walk two miles; heed, then
ignore, the traffic; speak to passersby;
discuss all aches that hindered sleep again,
those haints we cannot banish though we try.
Along the route arises some concern
about the weather; neither of us thought
to check the radar earlier. We turn
for home, walk faster, dreading to be caught.
The rain begins, soon pours. Completely wet,
we slog along, not laughing, loving yet.

MARCUS BALES

Trail

The branches blacken and the colors pale
Amid the steady stutter of the rain.
The mist has dampened sunrise to a glow.
This muddy way cannot be called a trail –
Cold, wet and dirty, last year's leaves remain
To almost hide the little signs I know.

Halfway down a gulley I hear the creek
That weakly trickles past and down the hill,
And see the landmark log I'm looking for.
A silent rip of mist gives me a peek
At what's ahead: my track continuing still
Up into woods, but then just mist once more –
Except I thought I saw up on the rise
A sudden turn I didn't recognize.

GWEN HART

To Summer

They said it wouldn't last. You liked to turn
the thermostat to ninety, take off all
your clothes and stand under the "waterfall"
in the shower stall until you drained the cistern.

At first I hoped that you could change, could learn
to bundle up in sweaters, enjoy the fall.
And then I found you curled up in a ball
around a candle, nose and fingers burned.

The days grew short; the nights were getting longer.
There were some tough decisions to be made.
I bought your ticket, drove you and your belongings
(Speedo, sunblock, shades) to J.F.K.

At least I got a postcard – *I belong here!*
Thank you, darling – postmarked Adelaide.

CHARLIE SOUTHERLAND

The Locksmith's Wife

And when she closed the door by sad mistake,
it locked behind her clicking to, a sound
she never would forget and for her sake

she couldn't bring herself to turn and snake
a peek at all she left behind, and found
that she'd indeed just closed it by mistake.

I watched her through the window pane, the break
that I'd expected for some time, come 'round.
I never would forget and for my sake

I poured myself into my work to shake
away my thoughts of her, the ones unbound,
unlocked by doors she'd closed by sad mistake.

But here I lie in bed so wide awake
that when I sleep I chase them all to ground
through dreams that I forget, for pity's sake.

And still I wonder what she drinks to slake
her thirst when she can't sleep, what drugs she downed.
And when she closed the door by sad mistake,
she never would forget it, for her sake.

JEAN FREE

Frankensonnet

Heavy misfortunes have befallen us, but let us only cling closer to what remains and transfer our love for those whom we have lost to those who yet live. – Mary Shelley

How would I reattach a love that's yours
to someone else? Like plucked-off wings to stones
or puzzle pieces where they don't belong –
an oil sun jammed in a starry sky.

Our patterned certainties become unknowns:

I'd end another's sentences all wrong,
sing unrhymed untimed lyrics to a song
composed too late to memorize with you.

To transfer love is something I can't do.

I choose to love with no recipient –
an empty space I'd rather mourn than fill.

So maybe I'm the one who's Frankensteined,
numb parts of me assembled with a drill
and bolts, the heart beyond repair, resigned.

ANNA M. EVANS

Lacrimae Rerum

Broken china pitchers
weep in little splinters.
Ugly family heirlooms
smear with tracks of rust.

Faded photos crumple
into grainy breakdowns.
Abandoned linen closets
sob out moths and dust.

Ancient houses shudder
over termite traces.
Vintage jewelry boxes
mourn in unworn rings.

May all brittle women,
dry-eyed from betrayal
take a bitter comfort
in the tears of things.

MARCUS BALES

For A Dancer

She danced in his apartment, tendons taut
and muscles gleaming, conjuring how close
we were to distance. She made it all her stage:
a chair, the couch, his bed – and raised us, not
so far above ourselves to overdose
our hopes, but just enough that we could gauge
the higher joy that met her in mid-air
with all the dreams we didn't know we'd lost.
And only by the screaming hush it cost
us not to cry did she know we were there.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Hair, Hair, Everywhere

This growth enabled Samson's strength.
It helped Rapunzel's lover rise.
Godiva wore its epic length
To shield her from Tom's peeping eyes.
Custer and Crazy Horse both flew
This flag at Little Bighorn. They,
Well-versed in their tribes' legends, knew
That glory rode the wind that day.

It made the Beatles icons of
A look halfway to wild and free.
No Rastaman but doesn't love
His dreads and ganja equally.
Its namesake Sixties love rock show,
Unbarbered and undressed on stage,
Made shoulder-length cascade and 'fro
Twin crests of the Aquarian Age.

But what to me is this quintes-
Sence of dust-catching filaments,
Which clings and make a shaggy mess
Of household and habiliments?
It festoons armchairs, carpets, beds.
It fringes every suit I wear.
I love my Persian, but she sheds
Daily her body weight in hair.

BRIAN STANLEY

Afterglow

We met in sunshine, summer-bright,
making us bolder than we are
and younger, giddily half tight
from drinking at the beachfront bar,
scoffed at by seagulls overhead
as, each in turn, we made the most
of small coincidences, said
what everybody says, pulled close
by circumstantial warmth or fear
of something cold and drawing near.

Fall. Moonbeams skirt the curtains, show
our flotsam-ready furniture
and by their monthly undertow
keep me awake, alert to your
slow breathing as you lie, now spent
and sleeping off our evening squall,
back turned to me, impenitent,
facing alone the bedroom wall,
the seascape bought that August day
receding like a tidal bay.

This is the light that we deserve
and in derision, blank and blind,
the clock face joining curve to curve
arises wanly from behind
to dim past days to present hours –
reflection, yes, but yours, mine, ours.

JEAN FREE

Astronomy

We draw constellations, not the stars.
Strung up, they die for myths
we've now grown distant from,
but we trace them with our fingers anyway.

It's meteors that shoot across, not stars:
compulsive whims burn out.
I cast my wishes there,
as if the dying carry anything.

Our backs against the grass, you say the stars
are stuck like pushed-in tacks
and fall asleep. I watch
a vicious line of fire cut the sky.

ANDREW PIDOUX

Homecoming

The garden's quiet and furnished
With night's upholstery.
The tree sleeps in its branches,
The branches in the tree.

It's just as I remember it,
Before I caught the plane
Whose cockpit was this bedroom,
Whose runway was this lane.

When I closed these yellow books,
My adolescent eyes
Were caught between the pages
Like bloodless butterflies.

Now threadbare stairs go up to bed
Before me every night.
But I can't sleep on pillows
That always dream of flight.

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Ferris lives in Kingston, NY, and San Francisco, CA. His hero is Ferdinand the bull. He has published here and there, now and again. He is very pleased to appear again in the *The Rotary Dial*.

Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia. Her work has appeared previously in *The Rotary Dial* and recently in *Angle*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Slant*, and *U.S.1 Worksheets*.

Not much is known about **Marcus Bales** except he lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio, and his poems have not appeared in *Poetry* or *The New Yorker*.

Gwen Hart teaches writing at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa. Her poems have appeared recently in *Prism International*, *The Quotable*, and *Amethyst & Agate: Poems of Lake Superior* (Holy Cow! Press). Her poetry collection, *Lost and Found* (David Robert Books), is available on amazon.com.

Charlie is a farmer living in North-Central Arkansas. He bales hay, cuts lumber on his sawmill, hunts and fishes. He is published in *Trinacria*, *First Things*, *The Amsterdam Quarterly* and has poems forthcoming in several other journals. He's been nominated for a 2016 Pushcart Prize.

Jean Free lives in Baltimore, Maryland, with her nine-year-old daughter, and works at Johns Hopkins University where she earned a master's degree in poetry. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in publications including *The Sewanee Theological Review*, *String Poet*, *The Raintown Review*, *Lines + Stars*, and *Contemporary Verse 2*.

Anna M. Evans' poems have appeared in the *Harvard Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *American Arts Quarterly*, and *32 Poems*. She gained her MFA from Bennington College, and is the Editor of *The Raintown Review*. Recipient of Fellowships from the MacDowell Artists' Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and winner of the 2012 Rattle Poetry Prize Readers' Choice Award, she currently teaches at West Windsor Art Center and

Stockton University. Her sonnet collection, *Sisters & Courtesans*, is available from White Violet Press. She blogs at annamevans.com/wordpress.

Chris O'Carroll is a writer and an actor. His poems have appeared in previous issues of *The Rotary Dial* and in other print and online journals including *Angle*, *Free Inquiry*, *Lighten Up Online*, *The New Verse News*, and *Light*, where he is the featured poet for Summer/Fall 2015.

Brian Stanley was born in Madrid and educated in French until high school. A longtime translator, he lives in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.

Andrew Pidoux is the author of *Year of the Lion* (Salt, 2010) and winner of an Eric Gregory Award from the UK's Society of Authors. Recent poems of his have appeared in *African American Review*, *Descant*, and *Punchnel's*, stories in *Litro*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, and *Stockholm Review of Literature*, and comics in *Forge*, *Star 82*, and *Wilderness House*.