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CONTENTS

David LeBlanc

Caught By The City in Winter 3

Toby Speed

New England Winter Etiquette 4

E.V. Wyler

Maps 5

Joshua Davis

Reading Richard II is No Way to Get Over Your Crush 6

Olivia Byard

The Missing Song 7

Cara Valle

Creamed Corn 8

Anton Yakovlev

Encore 10

Ann Keith

Eastward Bound 12

Jennifer Reeser

At first, when our immediate rapport... 13

Michael Ferris

Occam's Razor 14

Robin Helweg-Larsen

The Future as Charles de Gaulle Terminal 1 15

The Future as Event 16

Contributors 17

DAVID LeBLANC

Caught By The City in Winter

The folds of my coat stiffen in the frost
The patterns of my beard bend to the frost
The canals catch my image quite different in the frost
All plans are changed with the coming of the frost

Frost dimples my face with its shot
lends its hand to the wind's hidden whip
slowly crackles across parking lots
works its horsehair past my lips

Frost is the mallet in the open cut
Frost is the metal of the streets
Frost is the feeling felt by the rocks
In the frost nothing weeps

I count the days in the way of the frost
Blind I feel the day and my way through the frost
My eyes are sealed like eggs in the frost
I die yet still wait for the end of the frost

TOBY SPEED

New England Winter Etiquette

Whatever the weather
it's okay to say
that snow, sleet or ice storms
have messed up our day,

how treacherous the driving
from here to the store,
how sick of the white stuff
we are – send no more!

How we're glad we have tires
that can power uphill,
and seventeen layers
to keep off the chill.

Yes, it's fine to complain,
to express our dismay
that the wind off the river
is brutal today

and we're going to freeze
in just under a minute –
as long as we're not safe at home,
but out in it.

E.V. WYLER

Maps

When I'm charmed by choices I didn't make,
the chambers of my mind whimsically whine
to re-check the chances I didn't take.

Sometimes I'm chastened by a challenging ache
to change the chapters on my storyline
when I'm charmed by choices I didn't make.

If faced with a fork, I'd faithfully forsake
the risky road sans concern for the deadline
to re-check the chances I didn't take.

I'll ask if streets selected for safety's sake
disrupt or detour my destiny's design
when I'm charmed by choices I didn't make.

On a pretend map, perhaps I'd partake
in exploring paths I did once undermine
to re-check the chances I didn't take.

Since their unclear horizons appear opaque,
I'll opine that perhaps it's a right of mine
when I'm charmed by choices I didn't make,
to re-check the chances I didn't take.

JOSHUA DAVIS

Reading Richard II is No Way to Get Over Your Crush

This is the sonnet you will never read:
hands, mouth, hands – no more, not now.
I'm too damn old to tremble like a kid,
yet every time you smile, I do too.

Who cares. Our age loves irony. Cold noon
slides over me in cracking winter slats.
Last night my husband snored. I couldn't sleep
and couldn't help but wonder if your palm

would close (bare January limbs)
around my ribs more tenderly than his.
Grief bounds where it falls, the Duchess says.
I hear a glass bowl shatter on the stairs.

Down with iambs. Defy the father's beat.
Can I placate this shuddering music in some other measure?

OLIVIA BYARD

The Missing Song

You were missing by the ruins
where jagged towers chewed
out chunks of Janus sky
and cobblestones tripped up feet.

Where the sleek weeded river
preened in eddies and shallows
like a slow old narcissist
combing out its too long hair.

Where snowdrops peeked out,
suggested cold would go; to me,
who disbelieves there's strength
in downcast eyes.

Where leafless dogwood
displayed its red-twigged
crown. While tiny birds returned
at last to try with twigs at nests.

You were missing everywhere
and now beneath my breast –
that brutal compost,
the broken stuff of loss.

CARA VALLE

Creamed Corn

I didn't notice she had gotten lost.
The rest of us were singing Christmas carols
to withered sleepers at the nursing home.
We came with our 4-H club every year.

The rest of us were singing Christmas carols
when she ran off. I played the violin.
We came with our 4-H club every year
and knew our way around the stagnant halls.

While she ran off, I played the violin
and made a milky-eyed old lady weep.
We knew our way around the stagnant halls,
but Anna was too young, until this year.

It made the milky-eyed old lady weep
to hear us play and sing her "Silent Night".
Anna had been too young until this year:
she blanched at all the reaching, papery hands.

She heard us playing and singing "Silent Night"
more softly as she hurried down the halls,
blanching at the reaching, papery hands
of one old man who asked her for a kiss.

More softly as she hurried down the halls,
he called out, leaning on his creaking walker,
the old man who was asking for a kiss.
Creamed corn was running down his stubbled chin.

He called out, leaning on his creaking walker,
but Anna finally found us all again.
Creamed corn was running down his stubbled chin
as Anna hid behind us from his kisses.

When Anna finally found us all again,
singing "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen",
she hid behind us from the corn man's kisses,
and tears of terror dribbled down her face.

Singing "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"
to withered sleepers at the nursing home
while tears of terror dribbled down her face,
I didn't notice she had gotten lost.

ANTON YAKOVLEV

Encore

How many angels can fit on the head of a pin?

The angels put away their trumpet cases
and the guitar pick that just barely picks
after so many centuries. Sheet music
discarded, bar tabs closed. The river Styx

was out there somewhere, best they can remember.
They were supposed to cross it, and they had.
What happens when the pin runs out of angels?
They're starving now. They'd like some daily bread.

—

Everyone knew about the angel statues
at the regatta finish line. The coach
would bark the war-cry, "Swing it to the angels!"
while taking glamour pictures from her launch.

Now empty pedestals sit in the foliage
as racing shells drag to that finish line.
What happens when the pin runs out of angels?
A blunder. A gold medalist's decline.

—

I live on a flirtatiously curved parkway.
My house is walking distance to the train.
I get my kicks. When I grow tired of kicking,
I watch commuter bikes wear out their prey.

A swing set hangs in wait under the poplars.
It's true, I bite my nails on stressful days.
What happens when the pin runs out of angels?
My Christmas tree still has one, just in case.

A boarding house for every kind of wildlife,
the backyard shed is run by a raccoon
who fashions comfy beds from Santa statues
and holds tea parties every afternoon.

But now there's something in that boiling water.
No one comes to his spiderweb front door.
What happens when the pin runs out of angels?
Raccoons don't care for strudel anymore.

A Werther on an elegant lawnmower
traces a maze in grass to hook the soul.
A monster sits next to your dining table
and looks at you, and says nothing at all.

A curlew has curled up beside a glacier.
A melting clock keeps ringing on a stone.
What happens when the pin runs out of angels?
We listen for them still. Then sing alone.

ANN KEITH

Eastward Bound

We are going, my treasure, to lands far from here,
And from all of the things that were hurtfully dear,
Moving on till the past with its pain disappear –
 And sink all of it in the abyss!

Oh, God! Is it excess of gladness or fear
 Makes me tremble like this?

We have done now for good with the conflicts that tore us
 And the pining and grieving.
In the face of that endless horizon before us
 You are mine. We are leaving.

Farewell to all memories and wrongs and regrets
And to all sadness learned and that gladness forgets –
 Oh, my true, generous love!
If the world and my fate once combined to degrade me,
Their ascendent is lost over him you have made me:
 I am not what I was.

Can this place have the power to pursue us and find us
Now we fling off the falseness we suffered to blind us,
And go where no sight and no sound to remind us
 Will anymore be there?
Look back at that house standing empty behind us,
 And say what you see there.

Look back through the pane. Those walls must contain
 A phantom within.
For the man who went out is no longer the same
 As he that went in.

JENNIFER REESER

At first, when our immediate rapport...

At first, when our immediate rapport
was evident to man and vacant seat
alike, with one well-practiced sweep of your
right hand, you waved away an indiscreet
supplicant vying with me for attention,
without so much as giving him a glance –
your attitude one of misapprehension,
your poise and manner saying, *Not a chance*.
To me alone did you direct your voice,
and kept me with an unremitting gaze.
The memoir never ceases to amaze.
Whatever charm I held was not by choice,
so why should I recall this scene so clearly,
with bleary vision, cherishing it dearly?

MICHAEL FERRIS

Occam's Razor

My mother lived in a fairyland
where reason's blade kept to its sheath,
and elves danced behind the curtains, and
the ferns hid leprechauns underneath.
She knew there was a Santa Claus,
and expected him to her dying day,
and guardian angels, too, because
hers swept the pebbles out of her way.

I thought she was silly and naïve
when worldly I came back from school;
but there is a goodness, I believe,
that blunts the sharpest ridicule;
and there is a tenderness of heart
that breaks, and still it's steely strong;
and a life, where love is the better part,
by any logic, can't be wrong.

ROBIN HELWEG-LARSEN

The Future as Charles de Gaulle Terminal 1

The future is a long low passage,
Whitewashed, undulating,
A moving forward-flowing track,
No chance of going back.

The future has no message,
Its ads are guides only to the past,
Misleaders, redesignposts,
Echoes, undefined ghosts.

The future is travelled without presage,
Always onward, none comes back.
Predestination without destination.
Stationary or walking, you've no final station.

The future goes on until you get off.
I won't. I will not to get off.

The Future as Event

The future like an avalanche
Is roaring down the sky.
If you've prepared no hiding place
Then be prepared to die.
You never reason why.

The future like a question mark
Is scything humankind.
If you can see, then handle it –
You'll be cut down if blind.
The future doesn't mind.

The future like a giant wave
Is heading for the shore.
If you can ride that wall-like wave
It's no wall, but a door
Into forever more.

CONTRIBUTORS

For several years **David LeBlanc** has been quietly waxing poetic while slogging out a living in the financial industry but, with a recently earned MFA from the Stonecoast Creative Writing program in Maine, the opportunity to begin his PhD in Literature next fall, and now, his first publication in *The Rotary Dial* alongside the work of so many fine poets, he is delighted with the prospect of ending a career in numbers and beginning one in words.

Toby Speed is write-tired and lives in the Upper Valley of New Hampshire. She is the author of seven books for children, including *Two Cool Cows*, an American Bookseller Pick of the List, and *Brave Potatoes*, which was on both *The New York Times'* and *Publishers Weekly's* children's best seller lists. Her poems have recently appeared or will soon appear in *Light, Lighten Up Online*, *Boulevard*, *Highlights for Children*, and *The 5-2: Crime Poetry Weekly*.

E. V. "Beth" Wyler is a homemaker from New Jersey (U.S.), who lives with her husband, Richard, three children, three cats, and a beta fish. Her prized litany of rejection slips include such prestigious publications as ... well, never mind! Her poetry has appeared in *The Storyteller*, *Feelings of the Heart*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *Nuthouse*, and *The Pink Chameleon*.

Joshua Davis has recent poems in *Measure for Measure: An Anthology of Poetic Meters* (Everyman, 2015). He lives in Athens, Ohio.

Olivia Byard was born in Newport, South Wales, and lived in England until her family was transferred to Canada when she was ten. She grew up in Montreal, went to University at Queen's, and after lived in both Toronto and Edmonton, Alberta. She returned to the UK soon after her first marriage ended and has lived there ever since. She holds dual British and Canadian nationalities and her work moves across the landscapes of both countries. She has been a part-time creative writing tutor for continuing education at the University of Oxford for the past 23 years. She also ran a workshop at Reading University for Extended Education, and gave undergraduate tutorials to Stanford in Oxford students. She has always been politically engaged and has published a large number of letters in *The Guardian*.

Her first Collection, *From a Benediction*, Peterloo Poets, was nominated for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. Her second collection, *Strange Horses*, Flambard Press, was published in 2011 and *The Telegraph* listed it as one of the best new collections. Her new book, *The Wilding Eye, New and Selected Poems*, was published in April, 2015, by Worple Press. Further information, reviews, examples of work and a full bibliography can be found on www.olivibyard.com.

Cara Valle is a mother and teacher living in Chicago, IL. Her poems have appeared recently in *Mezzo Cammin* and *The Lyric*. She grew up in Dayton, Ohio, earned a B.A. from Hillsdale College in 2010, and taught poetry in Phoenix, Arizona before moving back to the Midwest in 2014.

Originally from Moscow, Russia, **Anton Yakovlev** lives in Ridgewood, New Jersey and works as a college textbook editor. He studied filmmaking and poetry at Harvard University. His work is published or forthcoming in *The New Yorker*, *Fulcrum*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Measure*, *The Raintown Review*, *Angle* and elsewhere. He is the author of chapbooks *Neptune Court* (The Operating System, 2015) and *The Ghost of Grant Wood* (Finishing Line Press, 2015). He has also directed several short films.

Ann Keith's poems have appeared in various magazines (*Orbis*, *Acumen*, *Eureka*, *Byline*, *Leading Edge* and over eighty others) as well as in a number of anthologies.

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 has also 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 was 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.

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*.

Raised in the Bahamas, holding four passports (Canadian, British, Australian and Jamaican), **Robin Helweg-Larsen** has been living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for the past twenty years. His poetry is mostly published in the UK.