



# THE ROTARY DIAL

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BRIAN STANLEY

**Cruel**

The crows of April come to caw  
at winter's tailings.  
You'd think their harsh, judgmental calls  
would soften in the warming sun.  
They don't.

The rains of April come to thaw  
our frozen failings.  
You'd hope we'd care more what befalls  
the distant man, the drowning one.  
We won't.

## Just Asking

Why do some poets love the villanelle?  
To me it seems a Sisyphean task.  
They must be drawing from a different well.

When poets die and their Collecteds sell,  
do academics or reviewers ask  
how come they never wrote a villanelle?

The French and the Italians thought it swell  
but wouldn't you with arms around a cask?  
What they were drinking wasn't from a well.

Is repetition an excuse to dwell  
on stuff best hidden by a stoic mask?  
Is pain the essence of the villanelle?

Remember how frustration made us yell  
when parents in their bromide wisdom basked?  
"A thing worth doing is worth doing well."

You think they ever tried to cast a spell  
or groped for obsolescent words like Pasch,  
snug in their safe, suburban Villa Nell?

The rhymes required to feed this little hell  
should come in buckets, not a dainty flask.  
Why do some poets love the villanelle?  
They must be drawing from a different well.

CHARLIE SOUTHERLAND

**Life on Mars**

I googled Earth from Mars to find your face  
because a satellite said you were there  
surrounded by a desert human race.

Telemetry tells me from deeper space  
that you are not like them. You are a rare  
rare delicate flower with just a trace,

a hint of red off Sisyphi Montés  
to Hellas Plains, long yellow streaks and fair  
fair glints of azure plummeting like lace,

a baby's breath bouquet in sunlight's vase.  
And all I want to do each day is stare  
at you and hope that you would, just in case

come find me too, that we could keep a place  
where secret water plumes erupt, aware  
enough to drown the drought and so embrace

the hue of us, the grafting in of grace,  
a helix core which blossoms our affair.  
I googled Earth from Mars to find your face  
surrounded by a desert human race.

MARCUS BALES

### **Sad Song**

A guitarist sang a sad song as he played  
He sang of love a lot like mine  
His true love was still more true when he'd strayed  
Her love remaining just as fine;  
He strays with all whose flower is arrayed  
For catching boys in lust's design  
He cannot change. Unworthy and afraid,  
He sings his song and drinks his wine.

Chorus:  
When your life's askew  
Since you can't be true  
And she says adieu  
Then the fault's with you.

When you're young it's beauty you possess  
And every love will always last;  
Many stumbles turn into success  
And you forget the failures fast  
With earned maturity and learned finesse  
When you can be yourself at last  
You'll find you'll talk about the future less,  
A good deal more about the past.

Chorus:  
When your life's askew  
Since you can't be true  
And she says adieu  
Then the fault's with you.

He strays with all whose flower is arrayed  
For catching boys in lust's design  
He cannot change. Unworthy and afraid,  
He sings his song and drinks his wine.

GWEN HART

### **Reading the Bicycle**

When you return and wheel the bicycle  
inside, the dog begins to quiver. His snout  
traces the tires as he chronicles  
each road, dirt trail, and parking lot.

He salivates, and licks off the stale beer  
you rode through, wags his tail, then barks,  
surprised to find the scat of wild deer  
whose path you crossed in the field as it grew dark.

We laugh and say that he's ridiculous,  
but it's a ritual I share. While you  
were gone, I read my book, and lingered,  
even when I heard you in the house,  
inhaling far-off scents, and feeling, too,  
a whole world blossoming between my fingers.

ANNE LAWRENCE BRADSHAW

**White Blossom**

Days of white spring blossom  
freely given up,  
lost to earth and mud and dust,  
trampled underfoot.

Beauty quietly passing,  
moments gone, ignored;  
once seen then forgotten,  
fluttering lace on sward.

Windblown pale confetti  
hints to summer promise,  
crushed, a ritual offering,  
loss pervading bliss.

JEROME BETTS

**Gale**

The air waterfalls off down the bending trees;  
Each bare branch uneasily saws plunges and lashes;  
Not a summery swish but a swell scouring a reef  
Tugging leathery fronds and harsh calloused sprays.

Quickening, it pours along gutter and sill,  
Nudging knocking and hammering rattling sashes,  
Sucking and snatching brick and slate, bringing wires to grief  
That harps on the tumbling torrent of the gale.

After the nightlong rumble and boom, the wind  
Drops in the morning. And the first blackbird's voice splashes  
Through light welling over patched fields and woods without leaf  
Clear to the ramparts of the mountains beyond.

ELISE HEMPEL

### **Fledgling**

All morning I watch the first robin-chick out  
of the nest stand balanced on the crook of my downspout,  
too big to go back now, but not ready to fly,  
and wonder how long the uncertain sway  
of its legs can hold on to a slick five-inch  
strip of aluminum, my worry must perch  
next to it while the mother flits back  
and forth with food for the others still tucked  
in the raveling donut against my porch.

And when I see later it's gone, and my search  
can't find it panicking in the grass,  
I think of how quickly my mother said yes  
when I flew from college, doubts and fears  
packed in my suitcase, and stayed five years  
tucked in her townhouse, making half  
an attempt at my life, and wish she'd left  
me teetering just a little bit longer  
over a thorn-bush, below the blue air.

LIAM GUILAR

### **The Decorator Admires His Predecessor's Work**

That's genius that is. You won't find many  
can do that today. Do what, she asked  
wanting the old-fashioned wallpaper removed.  
Craftsmanship. The man who hung that paper  
knew his trade. Worked for the thrill of a job  
done well. Proud of a skill that proved itself  
when no one noticed it. Me, I would give  
anything to be that good. And

how long will it take you? Years, Missus.  
Study, practice, victories, defeats. This job.  
Sorry. Two days. First we strip his work,  
pull down that old stuff, slap on undercoat,  
then wallop on the paint you chose last night.  
I'd like to take the time to do it right,  
then both of us could...By the hour?  
Quick, Slick and Outta Here. That's me.  
Whoever hung this paper loved his work.

MICHAEL FERRIS

### **Why I Don't Own A Camera**

I think it comes down to trust  
that wherever I am, wherever I go  
by foot or by car or by plane,  
to the garden, or to distant states,  
there will be castles and marvels,  
pennants of joy, unforgettable sights.

I have not been disappointed.  
The world is more than I can document,  
a day is more than I could frame,  
each instant perhaps a new rough prize –  
which I both see for myself,  
and I like to see through others' eyes.

Oh, I do have many pictures  
that people have given me,  
tucked away in drawers, mostly,  
but also on a surface there and here –  
not whats or wheres, but only whos,  
for it was always faces, not things or places,  
that I couldn't bear to lose.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

## **Recycled**

A glutton's diet of intelligence  
Gorges the shredders at the NSA,  
Where 13 tons of covert documents  
Are churned to spy-pulp on an average day.

Once pulverized (much like the privacy  
That must be sacrificed to keep us free),  
This paper finds repurposed destiny  
As part of the food service industry.

Each time you order from a pizzeria,  
The humble box in which your pie arrives,  
Plebeian cardboard stained with grease, may be a  
Byproduct of security archives.

Some citizens experience unease  
About the feds' eavesdropping expertise,  
But who would not trade in our liberties  
For fast delivery and extra cheese?

## **Woodpecker**

More than just one more chorister,  
Strike up your solo now,  
Head-banging timpanist who sounds  
The heartbeat of the bough.

Have at the tree. Roll hungry bursts  
Of thunder through the air,  
Small maestro on your massive drum –  
Winged, rooted, mismatched pair.

Your piping, churr, and other calls  
We'll hear yet, and have heard.  
Right now, percussion rat-tat-tats  
The anthem of a bird.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Brian Stanley** was born in Madrid and educated in French until high school. His poems have been longlisted for The Montreal International Poetry Prize (2011) and published in *The Literary Review of Canada* and *Encore*. He lives in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.

**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.

Not much is known about **Marcus Bales** except he lives 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 in journals such as *Measure*, *Mezzo Cammin*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. She is the author of the poetry collections *The Empress of Kisses* (2015 X.J. Kennedy Award winner, Texas Review Press) and *Lost and Found* (David Robert Books).

**Anne Lawrence Bradshaw** works as Writer Liaison for an American publication based in California, and in her free time she is wife, mother, and author of poems and short stories. Her work has been published widely online recently, or is forthcoming soon from, *Eunoia*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *Zetetic*, *Quarterday Review*, *Pigeonholes*, *Tincture Journal*, and is also available in a few UK print journals (*Orbis*, *Acumen*, *Artemis*).

**Jerome Betts** lives in Devon, England. His verse has appeared in a wide variety of British magazines and anthologies as well as UK, European, and North American web venues such as *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Angle*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *Light*, *The Asses of Parnassus*, *The New Verse News*, *Per Contra*, *Snakeskin* and *Tilt-A-Whirl*. He now edits *Lighten Up Online* in succession to Martin Parker its founder.

**Elise Hempel's** poetry has appeared in many places over the years, including *Able Muse*, *Measure*, *The Evansville Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and Ted

Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. She won the 2015 Able Muse Write Prize for Poetry, and her first full-length book will be published by Able Muse Press this year.

**Liam Guilar** lives in Australia. His most recent books of poems are *Rough Spun To Close Weave*, published by Ginninderra press ([ginninderrapress.com.au/poetry.html](http://ginninderrapress.com.au/poetry.html)), and *Anhaga*. He runs a blog about poetry and related subjects at [ladygodivaandme.blogspot.com.au](http://ladygodivaandme.blogspot.com.au).

**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*.

**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 was the featured poet for Summer/Fall 2015.