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GAIL WHITE

Lost Daughters

They vanish on their way to school.
A love of reading is their crime.
Bound to obey a different rule,

They marry long before their time.
(They may be wives, they may be slaves.)
Their parents have no strength to climb

Out of the pits of daughters' graves.
They keep their younger girls inside.
A girl is safe if she behaves

Herself and never seeks a ride
To classes that may fill her head
With words that teach her not to hide

But to respect herself instead.
A daughter shouldn't be a fool.
So many lost, so many dead –
They vanish on their way to school.

CONOR KELLY

A World Elsewhere

When I shall read, and having read, put down that book
that tries to tell me how the world can co-exist
with my perception of it via Wittgenstein –
“The world is everything that is the case,” he wrote –

when I shall leave the town in which I work and live
and drive the well-lit streets at night in search of hope
or dreams or what the street lamps shine their beams upon
as I change gears outside the East Side Shopping Mall,

when I shall watch the atmospheric harvest moon
drift past the town hall clock and slowly disappear
behind a blood-dimmed cloud that fronts a blood-dimmed sky
where stars have yet to shine and show a world elsewhere,

then shall I find another world, a world in which
a feather fails to fall nor deigns to slowly drift
into a wood where migratory birds might chirp
the evanescence of an early evening,

then shall I find a wrecked abandoned wooden door
lopped and chopped and planed and stained and opening where
a few tall trees remain to let light filter through
and cast a dappled shadow on a dappled earth,

then shall I fail to find the child that I once was
who disappeared into the distances I passed
leaving behind abandoned shoes, abandoned trails.
The world is everything that is the case; or not.

KIM BRIDGFORD

Hamlet and the Skull

The day you're face to face with death, the rot,
You realize you're holding what you've got:
However you decide to silk your sheets.
Ophelia's just a drowned girl now, the fates
Having wreathed her into thinking you were false:
Maybe you were. Maybe inattention's waltz
Is, in the end, the fly-buzz of all death.

Every skull is cold, and white, beneath
The narrative to thrill at: the architecture
That gives a moving body to a structure.

*Ophelia, each time that we touched, we moved
In water more than body. You believed
In glances that would cradle and uncradle.*

Love me, love me not: How name our baby's petal?

MARCUS BALES

Modern Lit

I taught a class on modern lit. We read poems, novels, stories, and tales from all around the world, from places the students said they hadn't known existed – except for Paul. The Great Leap Forward, and Mao, were news to them; Rwandan genocide was entirely new; apartheid they learned they should condemn, but only after Paul gave them a clue. All semester, over and again, Paul knew the well-known facts of peace and war – the facts the others should have known by when they got to class, and mostly well before.

One morning when I mentioned Cecil Rhodes someone wondered who he was, although she could have googled him – such skill erodes on purpose if there's someone who might know for just the asking – but I only smiled and said one thing that Rhodes had done was name a country for himself. They seemed beguiled one man had ever had such power and fame.

Then as I said "Of course they do not call it 'Rhodesia' any more, it's called ..." I blocked completely on the modern name. And Paul, who saw at once my memory was locked, slowly said "Zimbabwe". At his *Zim-* it flooded back, and *-babwe* we said together. I shook my head and sadly looked at him. "I had forgotten." He shrugged as if whether I had or hadn't didn't matter. "Well, you," I said, "are one American who is head and shoulders above the rest." He blushed and threw His hands up. "I'm Canadian," he said.

CHARLIE SOUTHERLAND

A Football Fan

She asks me coyly, "Well?" and I begin
to tell her but the noise is way too loud.
I rate her somewhere between a nine and ten.

She scrunches up her face and asks me again
above the cheering of the rabid crowd.
She looks at me, coyly grins and I begin

to purse my lips and cup my hands – the din
is drowning me out, the touchdown allowed.
I think we lead the Pats by nine or ten

and Brady gets the deflated pigskin
back. She's not having any of it, proud.
She looks at me coyly, grins and I begin

to yell to her but she can't hear; we're chin
to chin. Her brown eyes form a dark storm cloud.
I count the freckles, maybe nine or ten

there on her nose and I begin to grin,
look down and deep at what the Lord endowed.
She eyes me coyly and shimmies. I begin
to rate her somewhere between fine and ten.

ROSS MOYER

Safe Space

The only safe space that exists is right between the ears
It's safe to say one's thoughts are still one's own
Inviolable, like sacred scrolls, enclosed within a vault
Undisturbed, perpetually alone

Yet what remains, lamentably, is fodder for the crowd
Who render judgements that are often harsh
All blemishes one may possess and ones merely perceived
Are painted with the meanest sort of brush

It's not a pretty picture. No, that cannot be denied.
Some may retort, "I simply won't abide."
Wise counsel says, "Regrettably, one's choices here are few.
You must stand up or find a place to hide."

JANE BLANCHARD

Ipsa Facto

The papers came at last: the deal was done,
tried, juried, judged, recorded, stamped in red –
the dissolution of ourselves as one;
that marriage never happened, so they said.

All went into a drawer. Life resumed,
unshared, a continent apart. No traces
of any former union ever loomed
except in each of our four children's faces.

Now grown, those offspring still negotiate
our separate worlds while trying to arrange
their own. They know a lot and speculate
about the rest; thus, credits, debits change.

Some memories remain: the past can seem
too present in an unexpected dream.

SUNIL IYENGAR

State Finals

*Holiday Inn
Greenville, MS
1982*

Roped in, we file past spectators too scared
to wave or let a shutter blink, although
only one sound can shatter this tableau:
a word for which the tongue is unprepared.

The column ends at a microphone stand
propped on a platform, giving one the sense
of mastery unearned. In our defense
this march was not precisely what we planned

when plotting our campaign on foreign soil,
committing tracts to memory in case
by staring down the contours of a place
we'd know enough to not be judged disloyal.

Night after night the lists were fed to us
by those who claim to conquer is to binge
and yet who cannot quite repress a twinge
of fear that what they do is dangerous.

Words were acquired wholesale, their meanings still
dark, as if asking were impertinent.
To pause to note the view from our ascent
was thought to be ill-timed or laughable.

Instead we learned to recognize the cut
of their apparel, consonant and vowel.
A kind of etiquette, to run afoul
of which could jeopardize our stepping out

onto a stage that traffics on occasion
high school reunions, coaching seminars,
wedding receptions, dancers and cash bars,
but never has upheld so many Asian

Americans. Here we are, joined in kind,
regardless of our provenance or past
vocabularies, lexicons amassed
elsewhere and long ago. We left behind

those badges of our own state sovereignty,
trading them in for ribbons we might snag
by pulling magic letters from a bag
each of us hugs as evidence of plenty.

And plenty we were promised, too. To blend
right in, provided we could win ourselves
distinction first: tin cups to line our shelves;
cast-out spell-books; a title to defend.

MARYANN CORBETT

To the Unknown God

Upon the installation of the household's optical network terminal

Welcome, newest of idols
sitting zazen, blinking
asynchronous emerald eyes,
and humming a megabyte mantra

from a shelf close to the fuse box,
that gray-clad holy of holies
meditating its Ohm.

You will be fickle; we know this.
All our nether-world watchers
have failed us time and again.

The hulking bull-god Boiler
has leaked at a gasket, spewing
lustral waters on the catbox.

The water heater, slim, white,
pure as a temple column,
went marble-cold to the landfill.

We kept our part of the covenant.
They left us wholly comfortless
in a two-faced January.

And here we are, like ancients
shaky in the old religion,
yet hauling new deities in

to a pantheon of deadbeats,
while we glance over our shoulders
at the town gates. Oh, they rattle!

But we shall admit your priests
for regular ministrations
and make our votive offerings
with every turn of the moon.

JENNIFER REESER

Dresden Figure

Dresden

Expecting spite from anyone but me –
Your porcelain ceramic on a shelf –
You hardly can believe the thing you see.
I hardly had predicted it myself.
Stunned from the start, I never felt the fall,
Expecting love from anyone but you.
Warped now, end to end, once and for all,
If I am damaged now, I still am true;
More vivid, having forfeited some merit.
A broken neck has stilled this bobbing head.
My lip now crimson, bitten down from claret,
My blood – once blue – has dried to Spanish red.
You should have known. My pallid, olive sheen
Is but five shades from shocking, gator green.

ELISE HEMPEL

Mrs. White

Her name, the color of the chalk
that tapped in her pink-painted fingertips
at the blackboard, her girlish slips
that bounced under dresses as she walked.

Her name, the color of the bow
each day she wore in her graying black hair
like a string around a finger,
her smile from a desk so long ago.

CHARLES HUGHES

Running with the Wind

He dreamed he was running. He ran, still a child,
Through a field of tall grass; it stretched, endless and wild,
From the back of his house all the way to the sky.
The autumn air beckoned: *Stop running and fly:*

The grass he flew over broke under his feet
In a wake like skywriting before it's complete.
His face felt for the wind, its gusts rising and falling –
At times almost silent, but never not calling.

As a racehorse, when racing, knows nothing but that,
He wasn't concerned that the ground wasn't flat
Or even aware that the afternoon would
Soon be evening. The only thing he understood –

With the sun going down and the wind out in force –
Was he had to keep on his elliptical course,
Which he did until something half-buried and strong
Flung him into the night and he free-fell headlong

And woke in a sweat. The dry grass, the quick air
Were dissolving. He panicked. He managed a prayer:
That the snow might come late; for fresh days in the field;
That the shape he had started might be – whole, revealed.

CONTRIBUTORS

Gail White has appeared in several previous issues of *The Rotary Dial*. She is a regular contributor to formalist poetry journals and has twice won the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award. Her new book, *Asperity Street*, is now available on Amazon.

Conor Kelly was born in Dublin, Ireland and spent his adult life teaching in a school in the Dublin suburbs. In 2011, he retired to a small village in the Charente region of France to play *boules*, sample the local cuisine and run a twitter site, @poemtoday, dedicated to the short poem and a Tumblr site (poem-today) which publishes a classic or a contemporary poem on a daily basis. He has had poems printed in American, Mexican, British and Irish magazines.

Kim Bridgford is the founder and director of Poetry by the Sea: A Global Conference, www.poetrybytheseaconference.com, and the cultural curator of the Poetry by the Sea Reading Series at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Center City, Philadelphia. The editor of *Mezzo Cammin*, the online formalist journal by women, she is the founder of The Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project, a comprehensive database of women poets, both at www.mezzocammin.com. Twice nominated for the Poets' Prize, she is the author of nine books of poetry, including the forthcoming *Human Interest*. She is completing a three-book series, *The Falling Edge*, with visual artist Jo Yarrington, and is the recipient of grants from the NEA, the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, and the Ucross Foundation.

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*. You can however buy his new book of poems at https://www.amazon.com/51-Poems-Marcus-Bales-ebook/dp/B01G90B5TK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1472403249&sr=8-1&keywords=marcus+bales+poems.

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.

Ross Moyer was born and raised in central Virginia. He attended the University of Georgia, and received a B.A. in History in 1987 and an M.M. from The New England Conservatory in 1992. His compositions have been performed throughout North America, and several of his full orchestra pieces are recorded on the MMC label. Mr. Moyer is also a playwright, actor, and director. He lives in Cambridge, MA, with his wife, two children and a pug.

Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia. Her work has appeared previously in *The Rotary Dial* and recently in *Angle, Blue Unicorn, The Dark Horse, Mezzo Cammin, The Lyric, Orbis, and U.S.1 Worksheets*. Her first collection, *Unloosed*, is available from White Violet Press of Kelsay Books.

Sunil Iyengar lives outside Washington, D.C., where he works director of Research & Analysis for the National Endowment for the Arts. His book reviews and essays have appeared in such publications as the *Washington Post, The American Scholar, Contemporary Poetry Review, and The New Criterion*. Some of his poems have been published or are forthcoming in *American Arts Quarterly, The New Criterion, and River Styx*.

Maryann Corbett is the author of three books of poetry and two chapbooks. Her most recent book, *Mid Evil*, won the Richard Wilbur Award and was published last year by the University of Evansville Press. Her work has appeared in a range of anthologies from the randy *Hot Sonnets* to the reverent *Imago Dei*, and in a like range of journals, including both *Christianity and Literature* and *The Shit Creek Review*. Her poems have been featured on *Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, The Writer's Almanac, and American Life in Poetry*. Recent work appears in *LIGHT, Measure, River Styx, Poetry East, Ecotone, The Evansville Review*, and others, and is forthcoming in *Alabama Literary Review, Tampa Review, and 32 Poems*. Her website is at maryanncorbett.com.

Jennifer Reeser has published five books. She has received critical praise from Nobel Prize nominee, Sir Naseer Ahmed Nasir, and from X.J. Kennedy, who wrote that her debut collection, “ought to have been a candidate for a Pulitzer.” Her novel-in-verse, *The Lalaurie Horror*, debuted as an Amazon bestseller in epic poetry. Her work has been included in the anthologies, *Measure for Measure*, from Random House/Penguin’s Everyman’s Library

series, in Longman's *Introduction to Poetry*, and in *The Hudson Review's, Poets Translate Poets*. She is a translator of French, Russian, and the Cherokee language. Her translations of Anna Akhmatova are approved by Akhmatova's heir, and authorized by her agents in Moscow. Jennifer's own work has been translated into Urdu, Hindi, Persian, and the Czech language. Her website is www.jenniferreeser.com.

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.

Charles Hughes is the author of the poetry collection, *Cave Art* (Wiseblood Books, 2014). His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America, the Anglican Theological Review, The Christian Century, the Iron Horse Literary Review, Measure, The Rotary Dial, the San Diego Reader, the Sewanee Theological Review, Think Journal*, and elsewhere. He worked as a lawyer for thirty-three years before his retirement and lives with his wife in the Chicago area.