

# Yggdrasil

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# Introduction

**John Ladd**

**“INANIMATE OBJECTS”**

A Play in One Act

by

John Ladd

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**CHARACTERS**

(In Order of Appearance)

**MILLENNIAL NUMBER ONE**

**MILLENNIAL NUMBER TWO**

**SETTING**

A room, anywhere. There are, minimally, two chairs standing side by side at center, down-stage. Since cast size can be arbitrary and discretionary, there can be as many chairs on the stage as there are cast members.

**AT RISE**

**MILLENNIAL NUMBER ONE** and **MILLENNIAL NUMBER TWO** are seated in the two chairs. They are dressed casually, perhaps in college t-shirts or their old high school hoodies. Surrounding their chairs are millennial accoutrements- whatever they

may be. They have their earphones plugged into their ears and into their hand held smartphones. Throughout the play, they stare at their devices and sit perfectly still. The play can last an indeterminate amount of time since the passage of time means nothing.

THERE COULD BE A CURTAIN

THERE MIGHT BE A BLACKOUT

(but, in all likelihood there's)

A SIGNIFICANT CHANCE THAT THE

CHARACTERS MAY NEVER MOVE, AGAIN



# R. N. Taber

## **ADDRESSING THE ART OF BEING HUMAN**

Triumph of the spirit,  
come Earth Mother truly excelling,  
transcending creativity  
Magnificence of fertility  
against its critics, surely rebelling;  
triumph of the spirit  
An essential spirituality  
above any cultural-religious calling,  
transcending creativity  
An expression of equality,  
disability of its humanity availing;  
triumph of the spirit  
An all-embracing dignity  
with its human prejudices engaging,  
transcending creativity  
Ambassador for family,  
no art of motherhood more telling;  
triumph of the spirit,  
transcending creativity

*[Note: Inspired by the sculpture of disabled artist Alison Lapper by  
Marc Quinn that stood on the 4th  
plinth in Trafalgar square during  
2005/6 and later took pride of place at the opening ceremony of the  
London 2012 Paralympics.]*

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH DARK FORCES or  
GETTING THE BETTER OF DESPAIR**

Darkness coiling around,  
a wintry wind hissing at the ears,  
the world like a snake poised to strike,  
confusion suckling its fears  
Black sky descending,  
a shroud on battered mind and body,  
wishful thinking cowering in a corner,  
inner eye straining to see  
Huge puffballs threatening  
to smother even Hope's weak breath,  
as she struggles with a near blind spirit  
to outwit an untimely death  
Suddenly, out of nowhere,  
a winking, blinking star appears,  
unnerving the snake, nurturing mind  
and body with history's tears  
Revived by its light, touched  
by a centuries-old enduring lust  
for survival, inner eye recovers its sight,  
time triumphing over dust  
Pin-pricks of light in the black,  
challenges gathering momentum,  
calling on the spirit to stir its host body,  
and find its way back home



## **G-A-Y, FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**

The bell tolls, a single cry in the night,  
summoning all my senses to reply  
as if to some lonely body taking fright  
at having to contemplate it may die  
The cry, it painted me a dream one night,  
of a graveyard lit by a weepy moon  
where someone knelt in a pool of light  
as anonymous as some faceless stone  
The ghostly figure looked up at the stars,  
following a trail past even the moon,  
where the bell carried news of us to Mars,  
old God of War, Reaper come too soon  
The cry, it was your heart calling to me,  
the ghost, a living metaphor for love,  
assuming your fair form if, oh, so briefly,  
urging me to let go, move on, and live  
So it was, a dream bell, chiming we two  
(as one) across all time and space,  
berating the how, why, where (and who)  
denying gay lovers a deserving peace

## **ISLAMIC STATE: RIVERS OF BLOOD, SEA OF HATE**

A raging tide, Islamic State,  
(creating floods of fear);  
rivers of blood, Sea of Hate  
Religion, at the Devil's Gate  
(password 'power' here);  
a raging tide, Islamic State  
Good people left to their fate  
(even the sun sheds a tear);  
rivers of blood, Sea of Hate  
Women and children but bait  
(up for grabs, world media)  
a raging tide, Islamic State  
Islam dragged into disrepute  
(its peace lovers in despair);  
rivers of blood, Sea of Hate  
Poisonous radicalism at root,  
(no care for Earth Mother);  
a raging tide, Islamic State;  
rivers of blood, Sea of Hate

## **PROFILING SOCIAL CONSCIENCE**

I've run the gauntlet  
of love, life, fun, and tears,  
trying to make the best  
of things rather than complain  
about the worst years,  
struggling to rise above  
the pain human beings  
inflict upon each other time  
and time again  
I turn to nature  
for comfort and brief respite  
from a daily torture  
humanity asks me to endure  
with all the dignity  
and stoicism of someone  
always expected to put  
other people's needs before  
his or her own  
I lie awake at night  
wondering who or what  
is wrong or right  
amongst all that's been said  
and done in the course  
of whatever merry chase  
mischievous Apollo  
and outcast Cassiopeia care  
to lead us on  
Worse for wear, custom tee shirt;  
logo, loss and hurt

## **SANCTUARY or THOUGHTS ON GROWING OLD**

When I walk in the Valley of Memory,  
all those I have loved greet me there,  
light in their eyes like the sun in summer skies,  
past harsh words, beyond pain or care  
When I walk in the Valley of Memory,  
I rejoice to be all that I can,  
mistakes redeemed, life all that it seemed  
to the child I was and young man  
When I walk in the Valley of Memory  
lambs among wolves play at ease,  
rain washed clean, the grass growing green,  
flowers, icons of love and peace  
When I walk in the Valley of Memory,  
a breeze recites poems in my ears,  
trees sing songs about rights instead of wrongs  
and all *raison d'être* reappears  
Whenever I leave the valley, as I must,  
for the world as it is, a sorry place,  
I feel safer for knowing it's there for the going  
as a north wind rips at my face

# Stephen Bett

## Back Principles (1) : you have my back

You have my back,  
will teach me  
buddhist principles  
for non-fretting

If you *have* my  
back, nothing  
to fret  
about  
(non?)

But seriously,  
even backs  
have a learn  
ing curve  
—none has  
been bent to  
break point  
till now

You can heal it ...?

I am astonished

—& begin

to believe you

( ...yes)

**Back Principles (14) : Keats & Rilke coming up again (& damned Spicer, too)**

Who sees into me  
... has mine heart?

Too easily tossed  
(on a heap, on  
a mound)

This inning is  
future time  
(grace time ...?)

I would take  
a pitcher  
of you

Drink it, bat it  
out of here  
—whatever  
it takes

I lose myself

completely, am  
struck dumb  
in your  
buddha  
love

Where is my  
ground, where  
is my Heysus  
spinning to  
now

This (heady) gain  
is nerve loss  
(also)

It is mystery  
one enters  
—terrified  
(& possibly  
alive ...)  
Witless &  
spooked,  
& unafraid  
to say so  
(god help  
me)



Look in mine  
eyes & give  
me your  
strength,  
I have none  
that doesn't  
shake the bases  
loose in the  
night

Look in mine  
eyes, I have  
forgotten how  
to see

## Back Principles (19) : sapien & cowardly heart

Been through the agoraphobic's  
desert, Yuma at 117 degrees

Life in the furnace under  
a terrifying open sky  
(no place to burrow)

You say I need to en-  
dure the sweat-lodge,  
sleep with snakes  
& scorpions  
at my side  
(every fear alive)

Live a full week  
w/ the Terrors  
(find the buddha ...  
or the christ  
magnified?)

You say ...  
you say ...

And in you I  
surely trust  
(god help  
me ...)

True soul  
touch me,  
ease me  
(somewhat ...)

Horror wherein lurks  
the desert of my  
sapien &  
cowardly  
heart

## **Back Principles (34) : spiritual fatigue**

This is surely  
spiritual fatigue  
(on the loose)  
(at loose ends)

Backed into a corner  
(loosely speaking)

Back me, back  
me not ...

My back is knotted

Lies bound in a  
locked drawer

When it creaks open  
pray for something  
merciful

Pray there is  
something  
there

You will not  
have my back  
beyond this  
point

It will be loose  
at ease, or it  
will be  
broken

## **Back Principles (39) : pockets empty**

Yes, we have each  
other's back  
... till death  
do us part

I have no other  
“principles”  
left

Back left & back  
right pockets  
sitting on  
empty

## Back Principles (52) : agoraphobic

Big spaces are  
made of this

Phoenix to Yuma  
—terrifying

The christ to  
the buddha ...  
terrifying too

Hold my back (pls)  
the landscape  
would break  
it in halves

Agoraphobic,  
big space

Holding emptiness  
in my hands

## Back Principles (58) : more than life itself

Your breath like some  
kind of long  
remembered  
wind on his  
face

Shake him closer  
than ever

The christ love  
& buddha love  
are one

Get him there

You say to him  
*I love you more  
than life itself*

It is miracle  
enough



The Divine lives  
here, call it  
what you will

Though we are in-  
credibly small  
the path just  
got shorter  
by two  
breaths

## Lift Off 1 : and you aren't watching

Started to fly  
slow out of this  
godawfulness  
(couple weeks  
ago)  
—bird in fog  
tripping on  
guide wires

After full-force  
tidal wave  
mayhem  
(we are coast-  
al people)  
a 'book of  
person'  
for salvage  
(fly solo)

Bird testing its  
flight pattern  
checking ratched  
ligaments, scalded  
synapses, defeathered  
heart struts  
& various other  
vital connections

And you aren't  
watching (watching  
over us) any  
more ...

Which doesn't  
(finally) matter ...  
—clawed up in  
your mad  
hatter head

I will (god-damn!)

fly this thing  
this down-filled  
body, this fallen  
diving ball  
of fuzz,  
push it past  
any sound  
barrier one  
more time

Out-run all  
crazy-making  
blood-beat  
pain

Out-fly out-  
rageous shots  
you've thrown  
skyward &  
haphazard

Lightning bolts

to glide by

(Missing you  
missing me?)

**Lift Off 10 : bite-size**

(after Olson)

Was it gurry  
or offal?

A bird at sea,  
surely

Gulls all over the  
edges of my  
childhood

Never expected  
to be one

The scraps she  
throws me

the innards  
of a bruised  
woman

A Borderliner  
doesn't have  
a clue what  
she's hurling

It's always  
too big for  
bite-size

And it's always  
filled with a  
jelly of raw  
hurt

## Lift Off 11 : it is done

Let me say it  
just once (&  
be done with  
it—it matters  
not if she  
can possibly  
even “hear”  
it, so far  
gonno  
gone  
out  
of her  
frickin’  
georgeous  
head—

*I would*  
actually  
have



*given*

my

life

for

her

There,

I have

*said*

it, &

it is

*true*

It is

“the

truth”

And it

is done,

*finito*

## Lift Off 13 : grow a new one

The only thing  
that can kill  
a poet's  
heart  
is a  
woman  
with an  
astonishing  
soul  
turned  
off

She'll break  
it in so  
many  
pieces  
he'll  
never  
find

it,  
flung  
far &  
away

Grow a  
new one  
he'll  
need  
to say

Find a  
petri  
dish,  
quick

**Lift Off 16 : textbook**

I accept  
(in this “book  
of acceptance”)

I accept what  
the doctors  
tell me—

You, love, are  
mentally ill  
& our time  
so abruptly  
done

I *accept*,  
what else  
can I

say?

Except that

I still hurt

some days

What the fuck

else can be

expected?

Bruised

memories

collide,

bruise

again

And you are

dying daily

within me

by slivers

(like they

said you

would,

such smart  
people &  
we are  
simply  
text-  
book)

Moving  
across its  
sheaths  
of paper

Though the  
slivers feel  
like shards  
at times  
—glass  
cutting this  
very page  
you left  
blank

## Lift Off 17 : our own stunned heads

This bird was  
blindsided  
in a cartoon  
sky

Feathers blown  
out in all  
directions  
floating  
ground-  
ward

Like a rain  
of fluffy  
mass  
abandon

And then

fine

white

snow

fall

On the

tops of

all

creation

Especially

on our

own

stunned

heads



## Lift Off 38 : what were we thinking, love

Medicos (two) today

say she's wildly

(& irrationally)

“projecting”

bogus fears

And will self

destruct

Lawyer says this

bird should stop

investing emo-

tional energy

in a blown

out wind

(& a downed

mate)

Do not let  
her back in  
your life  
(they say)  
all systems  
(& both wings)  
damaged  
beyond  
repair

There is release  
& shame  
& sadness  
(of course)

And it's all  
connected,  
surely

What a mess  
what were we

thinking

in the

first

place

(love)?

Yes (of course)

that was

what ...

## **Lift Off 47 : of love**

Cruel streaks

Anxieties

Catatonic  
exhaustions

Paranoias

Dead libidos

Binge drinkings

Chain smokings

Blind drunk

facial

beatings

We endured

all these for

the love

of our

life

Our lives

Of ...

## Lift Off 55 : trying to keep our eyes

Good a place as

any to end or

stall mid-

air

Pieces around

stopped

flying

jagged

into

our

(my)

face

The wind moves

forward,

options

appear

She is completely  
unexpected,  
out of the  
blue  
“Big  
Sky”

Far to the  
south  
(of us)  
inching  
north to  
here

While we  
wait ...

Trying to keep  
our eyes open  
this time

Fly low off  
the ground



**Lift Off 57 : damn it**

I am through this

I have flown

She has gone

You have  
(totally un-  
expectedly)  
arrived

I am told  
this is  
called  
*life*  
(or some-

thing

like

that)

And damn it

I want you

And now

(maybe)

I know

how

And maybe

know enough

to know

why ...

# Donal Mahoney

## A Widow and Her Pekingese

Summer evenings  
after the news at 6 p.m.  
the Widow Murphy comes out

of her tiny bungalow and sits  
on her front porch swing  
with her ancient Pekingese

yapping mournfully in her lap.  
She waves to certain people,  
just a few, while ignoring most

although she knows every neighbor  
after her long reign on the porch  
as the queen of our block.

We live next door but she never  
waves to us or says hello to me  
not even back when I was 10

and offered to mow her lawn free  
for nothing, as I used to put it.  
She simply looked away and let

the Pekingese yap her answer.  
My father told me then not to worry  
about the Widow Murphy's ways.

Her husband died in Korea, he said.  
They never found her son in Viet Nam  
and she had a daughter doing life

for murdering a man the jury must  
have known had beaten her for years.  
The man was her husband and a cop.

Later in my teens my mother said  
the Widow Murphy had every right  
to be a private person and live out

the remnant of her life as she saw fit.  
But when I was 10 cutting our grass,  
I thought she was a ventriloquist

and the Pekingese her dummy  
yapping for all the world to hear:  
Life isn't fair, isn't fair, isn't fair.

## **A Hollow Tale**

A mountain man is Fillmore  
but there are no mountains  
where Fillmore lives  
deep in a hollow.

He's never had a job  
and doesn't want one now  
spends his days huntin' coon  
squirrel and possum  
and that catamount  
lore says is black.

At night he reads by  
lantern light with pit bull  
Satan poised at his feet.  
Folks in town know Fillmore  
doesn't feature people  
so no one comes callin'.

He feeds Satan  
but not too much.  
He wants Satan hungry  
when the thief of night  
comes through the window  
the way that stranger did  
a few years back and Satan  
had a midnight snack.  
Since then Satan waits  
poised at Fillmore's feet  
primed for another snack.

## Stranger Comes to Town

Beautiful fall day  
in a potter's field  
outside a small town.  
A funeral is underway  
but that doesn't stop  
the leaves russet and gold  
a few still green  
falling among the stones  
without a name.

The minister reads a verse  
over the grave of a man  
found by deer hunters.  
No idea who he is or  
where he came from,  
a body dumped.

Four people from  
the clapboard church  
with the wayward steeple  
over the hill gather 'round  
heads bowed, hands clasped.

An old worker with a shovel  
stands like a soldier  
near the shed and  
waits for everyone to leave  
so he can finish up.  
It's almost lunch time.

One by one cars pull away  
and now it's just us, the dirt  
and a gold leaf falling on me.

## **As Wally Explained on the Locked Side Later**

Another day at the zoo and  
Wally's new job was to feed the apes.  
Old Stanley had fed the apes  
for 40 years and loved the job  
but told Wally he was retiring.  
He was showing Wally the ropes when  
Wally got hit with a coconut  
lobbed by JuJu, the oldest ape,  
who liked Stanley but not Wally.

Stanley drove Wally to a dentist  
to check the damage to his teeth  
but the dentist wanted to be paid  
in advance and Wally had  
no money, only a bus pass  
and a bag lunch back in his locker.  
He had never had a credit card.

The dentist looked and sounded  
like Mel Brooks and kept saying  
he wanted his money before drilling.  
Wally's father came to the office  
and started writing a big check  
to the plumber who had come over  
the previous week to fix the toilet.

Bleeding from the mouth Wally yelled,  
"Dad, write the check to Mel Brooks,  
not the plumber," but his father said,  
"Wally, shut up for a change" and he  
kept writing the check to the plumber.  
His father had been dead for 30 years  
but he and Wally never got along well  
when his father was alive either.

## **An Urban Tale: First Job Interview**

Let's check the terminal and see  
what jobs might be available  
to match your skill set,  
the interviewer said.

The young man  
sitting next to the desk  
was wearing a plaid shirt  
and his first tie.

I know you'll take any job  
but let's see what we can find.  
A young man like you, Deon,  
just starting out, has his  
entire life ahead of him.

Here's the personal stuff  
you gave me so let's go over it  
and you tell me if I have  
everything right.

Your father left your mother  
when you were two and then  
your mother died when  
you were four and your granny  
took you and your brothers in.  
But she died in an auto accident  
when you were ten.

An uncle took you after that  
and he had trouble finding work.  
Food was scarce and you  
kept moving place to place.  
He tried hard, you said.

An aunt in another city  
took your little sister and  
she sounds fine on the phone  
when you get a chance to talk.  
Your brothers went to foster homes  
and you see them now and then.  
Things aren't going too well for them.

You graduated from grammar school,  
then dropped out of high school



and went back to get your GED.  
You're 18 now and have never  
worked anywhere before.  
You have no car, no driver's license,  
and no record with the police.

You live deep in the city but  
are willing to work in the suburbs.  
Transportation's not a problem  
because your church has  
bus passes for anyone who  
needs them to get to work.  
Let's hope that's you, Deon.

Bus passes are important because  
most jobs you qualify for are  
out in the suburbs, a long trip,  
but our city buses do go there.  
From your address I'd say  
it will take an hour or more  
each way, maybe a little longer  
in winter weather with  
the snow plows and all.

Now here's a restaurant chain  
with seven outlets in the suburbs  
looking for young workers  
with a GED and no experience  
to wash dishes and bus tables.

It's minimum wage but no benefits  
and you'd start on the third shift,  
apply for the second shift when  
an opening occurs, and then apply  
for the first shift after you've  
been there at least a year.

Then you'd wait for an opening  
on the salad bar and after a year  
with the veggies you'd want to  
look for an opening on the grill  
but that's third shift again.

I'd be happy to set up an interview  
but that's all I have at the moment.  
You want me to call now, Deon?  
Or do you want to sleep on it.  
This is America. It's your choice.

# Denis Robillard

## **The Buddha runs hot and cold**

1-

In the Chinese restaurant I stroke my warm hand

across the stone cold pate of the Serene Buddha.

The cold fen shuia of its ying yang repose

controls my fortune cookie fate.

2-

TWO children ate

FOUR left over fortune cookies. leaving me with

ZERO yummie prognostications.

An unfortunate math and fate equation at

EIGHT in the morning.

## **BROKE DOWN TREES**

In this dusty book, my mind recalls  
all the names and dates of generations past,  
all the flesh forks that went without issue  
these human leaves, roots and stems  
receding back into the ground,  
their seeds barren and unknown to me.  
We know them only by name, these dark ones  
on the annantaffel  
their asterixed names leave dark dots and dashes  
a semaphore for early death.  
Their's was a soiled over  
vertical dream that only touched the sky briefly  
but never the earth.  
A trod upon parenthesis vine of light  
whose wishes went sideways into the dark.  
In my mind, I see a broken forest line  
just tag alders and brambles  
a dark tangle of Gothic script  
forcing their way from forest of pedigree into now.  
How deep is the blood sewn into the land?  
How far is the vine that contains your name?  
How deep buried the bone  
that time and history has gnawed and skimshawed?.  
Who will know you?  
Who will know me when the future touches hands with the past?

## **A Tea Sonnet with Issa**

I love to drink tea with Issa from time to time  
Right now I am drinking Strong Arm tea.  
Or drinking basic revenue tea  
Last night I was drinking Sanora Tea  
And now I'm drinking the dregs of the Iron Buddha.  
Last week it was Fujian Green tea  
With its fragrant aroma and mellow taste  
A homely refresher and valuable gift.  
It says so right on the tiny green box.  
Sometimes I like to drink dank dark secret  
cups of Subliminal limbs  
Sometimes crenulated abstractions  
My favorite old time tea is Horse Radish Infinity.  
Its full bodied aroma I return to again and again.

I imagine sunshine washing the shadows of your face  
leaving luminal imprints like some holy veil  
or Turin shroud  
smuggled in from a far way land.  
while the birds in the yard  
play orthographic hopscotch  
on the crumbling driveway  
your shadow, immutable and clear  
races across this page.

## **RIVER IN YOUR BONES**

Sometimes we devolve into silent tactics  
where only landscape remains in the wandering eye.  
In tides against sleep  
ideas pour forth like water from a wound.  
Now it is time to write out the storm.  
To seek new waters and go forth.  
To duck under cold waves  
and memory's dark primordial plunge.  
It's all rather frightening and blue to  
hold your breath and wait.  
But we must all go towards the lake father.  
Immersed now and cold, you strive for those furthest waters,  
seek to build a life beyond the dry refuge  
rivered in your bones.

# Anca Mihaela Bruma

## MeYou

How do I love you?..  
With all your astronomies and eternities  
with all your uncharted geographies,  
and left unstudied philosophies!  
With your different constellations,  
supernova desires  
and gravitational collapses  
inside your luminosity,  
outside your debris..  
This is the Astronomy of Love!  
This is the Astronomy of Life!  
This is MeYou!..



## **Elysian Transcendence**

Your pastel sunsets incandescently intertwine my velvet dreams,  
and my verbs know how to whisper gallantly your prepositions.  
I have even learnt to have fluency in your body language,  
inhaling your line breaks, structuring the sentence of our Saga...  
Staccato notes and runic destinies are hovering my peripherals  
with cubist twilights, Venusian madness and supernova desires,  
passionate crescendos weep in rhapsodic existential reverbs,  
dismissing yesterday intangibles... welcoming today freedoms!  
An iridescence craved by seraphim passions and aeonic embraces!  
Breathing you... breathing me... in curved celestial impressions  
with stellar glimpses of thirty thousand empyreal souls,  
mysteries colliding with wonders in shadows of evermore!  
This Love! Oh, yes... this Love! Keeps re-birthing me!  
In retro films, silenced streams and harmonic breezes,  
out of nothingdom my poem rises up and never ages  
steadily reminding you: I was there... before I existed!...

## **Cogitation of a Soul...**

Your Look concaves my retina...  
Truth... dripped from my Eye!...  
Each moment is moisturized  
by fractured fractals.  
Engaged in your disengagement  
in this residual stillness,  
my past Self... still spins  
inside an alabaster universe...  
Choice?... just an illusion  
in these phosphene empyrean dreams,  
the place... where your Name  
shines in parallaxes!...  
I know... Now... Your words  
cannot satisfy my thoughts.  
I am left here...  
reflecting thousand times  
your feathered images...  
Logarithmic mirrors watch me  
how I climb my own  
bibliography of a Wish!...

## **Cyberspaced Truths**

I am not here to trade anymore  
the cosmic runes and liquid dreams,  
as Universe stumbles into its own photons...  
I am here to renounce my own spectrum  
with all its refracted words, rhythms  
and sensationalized perfect imperfections...  
Yes!... I am here... and I can hear  
all these mental asymmetrical matrices  
as an Ancient soul living a contemporary odyssey...  
You... on the other hand  
still encrypted in your structured signature  
anxious of losing the conceptualized notion  
of your Self!...  
Between Me... and You  
infinitesimally spiralling indigo pulsating  
cyberspaced Truths  
of our dichroic hearts!....

.....  
Just for you to know:  
I am not an ordinary street walker!

## **I Dance Your Silence...**

I dance your Silence,  
so you can feel my inner context  
between our heartbeats...  
I dance within your Silence,  
to remove the crowd between Me and You  
and find the Beauty behind my eyes...  
I dance your Silence,  
so Life will not have the same stroke  
within this storm of Light...  
I dance for your Silence,  
and my syllables build rotating words  
between your lines with sleepy sunrises...  
My mind... poems form to match your breath...  
I dance your Silence,  
within your whispering wing,  
while second still snows inside my eyes,  
a fleeting reality... piece by piece...  
I dance within your Silence,  
with thick lines of Reality...  
mornings are no more prohibited... by You!...  
I dance your Silence,  
with slices of our own chemistry...  
so... you can find the sum of my heart,  
when Time strikes with its inner rhythm...  
I dance your Silence,  
with my unwritten poetry,  
whispering through three seasons,  
so the Sky may not forget its Existence...  
I dance your Silence,  
with musical steps between us,  
an overture of two worlds...  
... a ballet of the Hearts...  
I dance your Silence,  
with kissed hellos and embraced goodbyes...  
With deep thoughts juxtaposed between Us...  
A requiem of dreams within white spaces...  
A soundtrack for a Life!...

## **Eternity Within My Reach...**

Time is too much in my days,  
millennium of mornings, aeons of evenings...  
and Vedic hymns fill the spaces between You and I  
with clandestine rendezvous and platonic reincarnations.

Time is too much in my days,  
millennium of mornings, aeons of evenings...  
sipping my re-births in apotheosis of future tenses,  
alchemy of Time calibrated by the universal mind's eye.

Time is too much in my days,  
millennium of mornings, aeons of evenings...  
time continuum of my heart imbued by sacred sameness,  
without tomorrows and separations between within and without!

Time is too much in my days,  
millennium of mornings, aeons of evenings...  
...I have this quench: "If Yesterday is Tomorrows' Today  
then... answer this: WHAT am I when I am not Me?..."

# Willie Smith

## **ABANDONED TO MY WORK**

Joy is the only person ever to strap a watch around my dick. The Bulova is hers – I've never been able to wear a watch. She tightens the band one notch only. Her wrist that slender.

She bends the shaft down. Frowns at the crystal to determine the hour. Only with herculean effort do I contain the wad.

She chuckles through the frown. Announces it's time for me to tuck herby back in my shorts. Removes the Bulova. Buckles back on the timepiece. Kisses my forehead. Departs the house for work.

Leaving me with day empty, load full, page blank.

## FINAL POEM

I'm walking along one day in the middle of the night drunk as an aint lost an apostrophe, when I tumble to a B. Musta fell off a sign for maybe BEER or BEANS or BUG SPRAY. Pick the letter outta the gutter, avoiding the stinger, copping a buzz. Wipe PVC dry on the back of my thigh. Now all I lack is rain, so I can put together a brain to think my way out.

Break into a pharmacy. Swipe a gun; bottle of reds; benzedrine. Run out high as a kite tugging the string around a finger to remember to forget my rapid vapid id.

I'm doing fine, making a monkey of myself, monkeying with clock sprockets, dancing off my back the monkey, withdrawing from a holster over the junkyard into the junkless dawn; when it dawns like forever blowing sailors on a fine tooth comb wrapped in Kleenex three sheets to the gegenschein: The answer is blowing in the window. Shards litter the bed, lightning flashing.

I swallow the sight. Cock the hammer, hammering Willie's cock faster'n Jack Meoff can apostrophize. For the first time ever shoot my big fat mouth off.

When the maid comes, around noon, just after midnight, she sighs. Smiles a finger off her nose. Sizes up the vinyl. Activates a disc of Dizzy blowing Bird. Sets about making the best of a bed gone bad.

## **GOD IN HELL**

Dear God in Hell:

Make my life big and swell,  
like a thumb hit with a hammer.

Make my life dumb and  
crammed with yammer,  
and with death and all its glamor;  
because, oh my dear God in Hell,  
it is so good and well  
that I am what I hammer.



## MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

I'm smoking midnight special  
on the night train,  
waiting above the market  
on a corner on vine  
in vain for a lift  
beyond the half-dream  
of nicotine and wine.  
Another puff, another glug,  
no other goal  
than to drain the pain.

.  
Rain streaks the fog in the  
cone of a streetlight whose pole  
I lean against alone, feet  
on the curb, nothing  
to disturb the soul, save the spice  
of that unattainable plane.  
Another glug, another puff  
on another link to the chain,  
no other goal than  
to myself to complain.

Maintain the rhyme, repeat the beat,  
hold an old gold inside the mind.  
Stain the teeth, cure the lungs,  
pickle the brain. Just so  
my complaint remains  
this refrain: I'm  
smoking midnight special  
on the night train.

# DON MAGER

**January Journal: Thursday, January 31, 2013**

The sun's breathless lava blaze sings an  
aubade to longings for the night to  
disappear into the clarity  
of morning's bracingly crisp hello.  
Eager to get on with the job at  
hand, it climbs over the threshold edge  
of earth and spreads its vast hibiscus  
bloom between the silhouetted trees.  
As its scarlet face balances just  
above the tree line pausing to catch  
its breath before mounting the white sky,  
the bus stop's squinted eyes cannot tear  
away. With gloved hands fending blindness  
and welling tears, gazers simply gaze.

**July Journal: Saturday, July 27, 2013**

The sunset squinies into penny  
small incendiary eyes. Direct  
hits hurt. Like incandescent sheets of  
ice across roof tiles, yellow-white boils  
its sinking flare. Long lean parodies  
of shadows emaciate themselves.  
Sky retains its blue in darkened pools.  
Arriving and departing vapor  
trails widen in wakes of carmine—gold—  
lavender. They are *sotto voce*  
flutes and oboes piping quietly  
above the trombone and tuba march  
down into the horizon. Half-flared  
peacocks melt to blue oblivion

## **July Journal: Sunday, July 28 2013**

Beneath boisterous frog choir rehearsals,  
night spawns tiny inconveniences.  
Back in the woods, half drowned water-logged  
old tires swarm while nearby the wheelbarrow's  
stagnant green water swims with squiggles.  
Their wee genetics tick off quick nights  
of metamorphosis. Their tiny  
black-white Asian tiger stripes plan next  
week's itineraries for muggy  
afternoons of sniffing out neck sweat  
and backs bent over bush bean clumps. Their  
hypodermics plan attacks. For welts  
to accost an hour with itching, their  
codes already know where best to strike.

## September Journal: Wednesday, September 4, 2013

As it lets go of the shadows' hold on murkiness, the ebbing breath of night brushes with cool soft fur. The shadows' folds uncover varieties of gray that reemerge in the pre-dawn chorus that purrs like cats draped over backs of sofas or on the sills of windows. Meanwhile, like popcorn at full throttle in a wire shaker on campfire coals, the frogs have been firing off all night. Shadow purrings and frog cackles walk hand in hand along the narrow balance beam toward a bleaching sky that clears dawn's stage and sets its props.

## September Journal: Thursday, September 5, 2013

Their stalks snap. They overflow their wire  
baskets. They sprawl on gangly arms. They  
drape their coarse enervated giant  
spider vines along the ground. Parched leaves  
twist on nooses in the breeze. Like small  
forlorn balls left on a derelict  
Christmas tree thrown to the curb, along  
the chaos of their spindly branches hard  
Lima green tomatoes gleam in the  
afternoon sun. *Don't pass us by, they say.*  
*We fry up nicely. Give us a try.*  
In a parallel cosmos, gnawing  
the tannin-reek of Hickory nut husks,  
squirrels go about their frantic chores.

# Natalie Crick

## **The Garden Outside The House**

She was out there again that morning.  
Talking, laughing, singing,  
The garden filled with sweet birdsong  
And the aroma of summer.  
The sunset leaked red blood,  
Annihilating him.  
A love gift or a  
Romantic invitation.  
She had one eye, he had two.  
He was waking from a fitful dream.  
It soon became dark,  
The sky full of storms.  
He saw her solemn death dance,  
Wet and electric,  
An Autumn widow wearing grey.  
It was starting to happen again.

## **For You**

This month her depression began.

He obsessed her.

She tied her heart with ribbon like a present,

Licking his fingers and kissing his feet.

Words failed her.

She breathed him in like a terrible secret,

A childless woman beneath the ivory moon.

But what about his eyes, his eyes, his eyes.

Walking in the Winter trees

Were his shadows in the fog.

He was innocent as a lamb.

Sleep, my Angel,

Deaf and dumb

As the drugged summer sun.

My Love,

I want you.



## **This Dark Thing**

This dark thing that sleeps in me,  
It steals from me so I am left with nothing.  
I am blameless, Godiva.  
The murmurings are alive.  
Watching you dully from my bed  
I have taken the pill to kill.  
I mourn my own death,  
Drowning into the night.  
My tears could devour  
The ocean. I want, I want.  
I have lost myself. But that is not enough.

## Love Me

Two friends.  
Chalk and cheese, gelled with want.  
The shy one with silver sticks  
That clunked on wooden boards  
Skipped to a secret song.  
And him, a gauzy giant,  
The bitter scat his excuse.  
It shines for special occasions,  
Shouting about life of biting tongues:  
I am history reinvented.  
Blink twice. I am not out of the ordinary.  
He tells me how I have a nervous laugh  
And how nice  
The mice looked, strung up in grey wire.  
An easy spear through each socket.  
Would I like to walk with them?  
It would be like kissing the flute  
With my eyes smoking and hissing,  
Ash sinking in each pit.  
Let me roll in icy pools.  
The Other does that,  
Hair wet and black,  
Tossing acid.  
Do you ever sleep?  
He wants to be loved.  
I do not react.  
The sun lets them in,  
The moon breaks in two.  
Bell, once.  
Bell, twice.  
One is finished.

## Young Love

When you were five  
And I was six,  
We would hold hands  
Just like this.  
When you were nine  
And I was ten,  
We made a pact  
To never tell, and then:  
You began to tell me every word  
That escaped from your lips, with cold secret stares.  
A look or a glance through long  
Fingertips. Your beautiful face.  
I see you sitting by the stair, your body  
Tight in hot sun, a sad lamb  
On stage. And when I have passed you  
Flushed red raw, I want to remember  
How young we were.  
Splayed out across the pitch  
Like baby starfish, pink and pinched  
As tongue's blood.  
Our father and mother are in silent reverie,  
With knotted wrists and electric hair,  
Nodding and clapping, as dumb waiters do  
To our games. When we are together we are together.  
Today we are family as the ill  
Walk in lines, with shaken smiles that marry us.  
Mother, to me you are a figure of fun.  
Father, you are a child when you wake up each morning.

## **And We Are Hiding Now**

For some time they sat in the cornfield  
And spoke like dull mice  
About what would be done.  
When the sun, a ruined fruit  
Ripped the dilute garden growth  
And spread a red alarm over tall shears  
The eldest was heard to say  
“Bury them in the cellar.”  
Skins of lice lamented  
Over the pulsing stalks,  
Their drones blanched in the air  
Curdled and hot.  
The house was distant and brown  
Weeping a creeping shadow from within,  
That seemed to warn: ‘Keep Out’.  
A blaze from the forgotten.  
Old plastic swing swung over the perimeter,  
A goodbye, flinch.  
The sky was high and blue.  
In the giant shoots  
Lurking softly and surreal,  
Two ducklings on the gilded shore.  
The sea was swimming with flushed young men  
Severing feathered heads  
With long silver scissors.  
Pointed thorns in a paper box.  
The woman roared like the man.  
“Stop”, said the girls  
With frilled socks.  
Once the heavens were purple  
Like a bruise, the corn  
Grew cold and wet.

The house stood waiting, a deadened bulb  
With a swift march  
They advanced through the field,  
Cutting stems.

## **She Chose Red**

It is Winter.  
He dragged her through the snow,  
Her heart in her hand.  
She was trying to be special.  
In her room  
Is a barbed cage.  
She made it herself.  
She waits inside with a needle in the dark.  
Exiled.  
Chewing her own hair.  
They don't talk to her.  
Her mouth is full of hair.  
She chose red.  
Dreamer, how did you get so low?  
Anywhere you go,  
She will follow.  
She is a slut called Jezabel.  
There is sunshine in an empty place.  
Her birthday: a black death.  
The rush she gets. Machina.  
Her cousin is a spider.  
Withdraw.  
Now give her an inch, a mile.  
She is a beautiful liar.  
Aphrodisiac.  
She crawled out from the sea.  
A horse drinks from the dark water  
Dying, vapourous.

## **The Pandora Lady**

She was like Morgan;  
Very pretty, though grey  
As Autumn rain  
And rigid and pale in mood  
Like Lazarus or a different Goddess.  
Her sparkle fell in a flurry of stars  
From a beautiful boat in the sky.  
She dreamed she was married.  
Sometimes she wished her name was Pandora,  
Then transformed into herself again in shame

# Shawn Chang

## Full Circle

### A Sonnet

Beyond the moon of mem'ries forlorn  
And lost in spits of sunder'd stars and tears,  
Reborn once more on shores the shades adorn -  
The narrow hopes that die as Nightfall nears.

No dreams to contemplate, and none to catch;  
No thoughts to hear, and none for one to hold -  
Afloat in lava rivers under latch  
Of atmosphere of bale and beasts untold.

With soul and spirit standing poles apart;  
And cleft in half, the crack a million miles -  
Is but the hinder'd and unheeding heart,  
Which Ignorance by night with wiles beguiles.

Full circle back to kingdom come; and from  
The tomb of womb to womb of tomb we come.



# Bruce Dale Wise

## **The Broken Lute**

by Blue Cedar Siew

Above the pale wooden floor of grainy curving lines,  
upon the table's straight, unstable, lofty, leg's designs,  
securely settled on the red, triangular, top's home,  
along with hyperbolic vase and light-gray metronome,  
beside the note-filled sheet of music, crumpled at the ledge,  
a muted-brown mahogany lute, broken, o'er the edge,  
sits in a canvas oil by one Klaus of Ygdrasil.

Three birds are flying overhead beyond the window sill.  
One brushes up against Picasso, Braque and others found  
in Canada, like Browning drowning in the pond of Pound.

# Michael Lee Johnson

!

**THEME: *Tranquility***

***The Seasons and the Slants*** (V2)

I live my life inside my patio window.  
It's here, at my business desk I slip  
into my own warm pajamas and slippers-  
seek Jesus, come to terms  
with my own cross and brittle conditions.  
Outside, winter night turns to winter storm,  
the blue jay, cardinal, sparrows and doves  
go into hiding, away from the razor whipping winds,  
behind willow tree bare limb branches-  
they lose their faces in somber hue.  
Their voices at night abbreviate  
and are still, short like Hemingway sentences.  
With this poetic mind, no one cares  
about the seasons and the slants  
the wind or its echoes.

## ***Iranian Poetry Lady*** (V2)

The first time I saw your face, cosmetic images, dust, dirt, determination  
fell across your exiled face. Coal smoke lifted with your simple words and short poems.  
Your meaning drawn across a black board of past, rainbows, future  
fragment, still in the shadows.  
Muhammad, Jesus twins, only one forms a halo alone.  
One screams love, drips candle wax, lights life, shakes, love.  
I encrust your history in the Ginkgo tree, deliverance.  
I wrap in the branches the whispers in your ears a new beginning.  
I am the landscape of your future walk soft peddle on green grass.  
I will take you there. I am your poet, your lead, freedom clouds move over then on.  
I review no spelling, grammar errors; I lick your envelope, finish, stamp place on.  
Down with age I may go, but I offer this set of angel wings I purchased at a thrift store.  
I release you in south wind, storms, and warm in spring, monarch butterflies.  
Your name scribbles in gold script.  
Night, mysteries, follow handle, your own.

***Sundown, Fall*** (V2)

Fall, everything is turning yellow and golden.  
No wind, Indian summer, bright day,  
wind charms with Indian enchantment,  
last brides marry before first snowfall,  
grass growth slows down, retreats,  
bushes cut back with chills, retreats,  
haven of the winter grows legs, strong,  
learns baby steps, pushes itself  
up slowly against my patio door, freezes,  
and says, "soon, soon, Spring I'll be there."  
Winter is sweeping up what is left of fall,  
making room for shorter day's longer nights.  
I hear the echoes of the change of seasons,  
until next sundown sunflowers grow.

## ***California Summer***

Coastal warm breeze  
off Santa Monica, California  
the sun turns salt  
shaker upside down  
and it rains white smog, humid mist.  
No thunder, no lightening,  
nothing else to do  
except sashay  
forward into liquid  
and swim  
into eternal days  
like this.

**Common Church Poem** (V4)

Sitting here in this pew  
splinters in my butt  
I spend hours in silent prayer.  
I beg Jesus for a quiet life.  
Breathing here is so serene.  
Sounds of vespers, so beautiful  
dagger, so alone, unnoticed.  
You can hear Saints  
clear their eardrums  
Q-Tips cleanse mine.  
I hear their scandals  
I review mine.

## ***If I Were Young Again*** (V3)

*Piecemeal summer dies;  
long winter spreads its blanket again.*

*For ten years I have lived in exile,  
locked in this rickety cabin, shoulders  
jostled up against open Alberta sky.*

If I were young again, I'd sing of coolness of high  
mountain snow flowers, sprinkle of night glow-blue meadows;  
I would dream and stretch slim fingers into distant nowhere,  
yawn slowly over endless prairie miles.

The grassland is where in summer silence grows;  
in evening eagles spread their wings  
dripping feathers like warm honey.

If I were young again, I'd eat pine cones, food of birds,  
share meals with wild wolves;  
I'd have as much dessert as I wanted,  
reach out into blue sky, lick the clouds off my fingertips.

But I'm not young anymore and my thoughts tormented  
are raw, overworked, sharpened with misery  
from torture of war and childhood.  
For ten years now I've lived locked in this unstable cabin,

*inside rush of summer winds,  
outside air beaten dim with snow.*

## ***Flight of the Eagle***

From the dawn, dusty skies  
comes the time when  
the eagle flies-  
without thought,  
without aid of wind,  
like a kite detached without string,  
the eagle in flight leaves no traces,  
no trails, no roadways-  
never a feather drops  
out of the sky.



# Fabrice B. Poussin

## Warm soul

I wonder how many times you sat in this room  
listening to the heavy rains upon the steel roof  
weaving away, dreaming of the seed to soon sprout.  
A fire raged in the hearth to keep your bones dry  
speaking of days in a forest you knew so well  
lively flames reflecting their might onto your soul.  
These walls loved you for three decades and  
now turn a blind eye to the intruder in me  
as the wet logs you cut burn away to you.  
I wonder how many times you thought  
of the beauty you would some day bequeath  
the world your legacy so vast and make it grow.  
The drops are cold and heavy as ice tonight  
carrying with them the smile you always bore  
and through them again, I hear you laugh.  
It was a good evening for you even in the wind  
in a deep breath and a sigh, you inhaled a life  
took an unknown bow and quietly went to sleep.

## Moving consciousness

Looking forward to losing part of himself in full contemplation  
the ageless old man remains motionless day after week  
unsure of the reality of a body no longer recognizable  
leathery envelope tickled by the youth of the dragonfly.  
Pupils so dark and deep project fiery sparks all around  
while despondent a soul wonders in and out slowly  
seeping through pores of doors opening in every inch  
of a flesh being questioned by a brittle cage without purpose.  
A stellar organ of dense passion is set for sleep once more  
reflected on the wall of a brain in awe to what he only sees  
the illumination is certain on lips somber smiling within  
the little boy of a hundred centuries awaits patiently.  
He alone is conscious of a beginning journey fantastic  
many stare in wonderment at the oddity he has become  
man perhaps, remnant of who he used to be, yet so much more  
for he is fully possessed by the cocoon of his metamorphosis.  
The morrow means no more, to them still he may appear to be  
statue to the past millennia of myriads just like him  
having reached the perfect being of sublimation  
consciousness has moved with the stars, keeps on.

## What lies ahead

The force is strong as it pulls forward  
into a future I am not quite ready to a&end.  
It seems a million arms are playing tug of war  
with a will ¶ring of a heavy leaden past.  
In the present the surface is too smooth;  
the cleats slip as they dig a li&le deeper.  
Leaning back with a last a&empt to resist  
the e)ort takes over the pleasure of the day.

# Post Scriptum

## Glen Armstrong

### There Are Not Enough Chairs for Everyone

Duke gets deep dark spots.  
Meredith speaks of horizon lines  
that will accommodate a sleepy river.  
Skin and repentance play  
as if around a Maypole,  
as if twin sisters.  
If I sing will you join in  
with that awkward harmony  
that got us banned  
from all those open mic nights  
so many years ago?  
Many were forgotten.  
Uncle Cotton says that God studies  
women in their rooms.  
My memories of oil  
keep me up at night.  
I can't help but run  
on a single low mood,  
but in the parlor the others  
compare things unheard  
to those that they mostly deciphered.  
They sit around a jar of lavender  
and sea glass.  
Sundance Channel Cento  
Say what you want about the tenets  
of National Socialism, Dude.  
At least it's an ethos.  
We've got chicken tonight.  
Strangest damn things.  
They're manmade.  
You must be double-jointed.  
And you must be Hungarian.  
(Who does that guy in the coat  
think he is anyways, Bo Diddley?)  
This famous linguist once said

that of all the phrases  
in the English language,  
of all the endless combinations  
of words in all of history,  
that "cellar door"  
is the most beautiful.

Now if you'll excuse me,  
I'm going to go on an overnight drunk,  
and in ten days I'm going to set out  
to find the shark that ate my friend  
and destroy it.

Midsummer XXX

Afterwards there were questionnaires

And parasagittal MRIs

Some brains sparkled

Like Christmas trees

Some lit up

Like a map of Athens

I don't remember much

I think I cashed the check

For participating

In this study and spent

The money on a copy

Of DeSade's Jus tine

At one point she was running

Through the woods

With bruises on her thighs

At one point the situation

Was so perverse

That she slipped into

Another dimension.

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