

# *Yggdrasil*

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# Introduction

## Holly Day

### **Dinner with the English Professor**

You walk into their house, instantly  
at home, take  
the offered glass of wine  
reading more into her polite smile, the guided tour  
“This is where I’ll take you,” as you  
stop in the bedroom  
longer than necessary  
words you don’t dare say aloud  
but already feel her agreement.

This is the part of the song where I would interject  
a slow, droning bass line, no percussion  
breathe heavy into the microphone, hands  
wrapped tight around the microphone as though  
it was somehow holding me upright, eyes closed  
as though I was about to say something really important.  
The audience would lean forward in their chairs, the teenaged girl  
at home listening on her pink headphones would hold her own breath  
close her eyes, just like me, anxious to hear what I was about to say.

Her husband is an uncomfortable  
obstacle  
but one you can contend with. You have already  
erased him from the room, some unfortunate accident  
a prolonged business trip.  
You find comfort  
and encouragement  
at the weight of her hand on your shoulder  
the porch light sets her hair off, her eyes  
promise to have you over  
again.

If this was the live version, the song would just end after a few minutes

of solid guitar refrain. The drummer might stop completely  
so that audience would know that it was time to clap wildly in appreciation.  
Ideally, the applause would rise up just in time  
to muffle the staggering end of the song, mimic the measured fade  
of the studio version. On a bad day  
the band would just stop playing, leaving me with nothing but dead silence  
in the short minutes before the next song started up.

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# Holly Day

## **Feet Skipping Up the Stairs**

I am withering  
under the burden of memory,  
distract myself by trying to maintain  
my fuckable parts.

I have forgiven the tiny guests  
that left my body a disaster  
but still send flowers  
on my birthday, sometimes call.

Sometimes, when I'm sad,  
I can feel their tiny hands on my skin  
those ghost fingers that clutched at me  
for more, always more  
specters I miss more  
than I can stand to admit.

## **I Think of Love**

What you must think of me, from seeing only  
my fingers flutter against the window panes  
as I watch the children in the morning playing in the street  
the men getting into their cars on their way to work  
the mothers in their housecoats shuffling cheerfully through their days.  
Do you know there's a woman attached to these fingers, and if so,  
do you imagine me to be beautiful, old,  
or some kind of monster?

Across the street, a dog barks loudly and angrily  
at something, and I pretend  
this dog can see me, and sees me as some sort of threat, as if  
it thinks about me opening the door to my house and stepping outside  
someday, maybe. Even though  
I can barely see his black nose  
pressed against the window from where I am  
I imagine this noisy dog to be some sort of large breed,  
a Doberman, a pit bull maybe  
something much too ferocious to ever confront.

## Plastic Asses

Metal-wheel lightning my only source of sunshine,  
birds of prey fall smoking from the tracks  
I wonder what they're thinking.  
In this little hole in the wall of the tunnel  
unexpected hand on my shoulder, condescending eyes  
watch through the windows of the cars the wheels  
that drum beyond my sky at night, past  
this cage I call home this city

is not real. I scuttle to safety  
from little laughs, stupid jokes, air that burns  
in my nostrils, my neighbors are weird.  
They eat each other.  
New hand on my shoulder, condescending  
hands jerk back, absorb the recoil  
this is it. I wonder what they're thinking  
these passersby

They're not my friends.

## **Genesis**

Arms reach out, fill a sky that may or may not yet be  
comets streak from fingers that may or may not be  
holding the sun like a shield against the empty  
radio waves of space, the constant black, the constant noise  
this is. This is not.

There are eyes open to this, or perhaps they are shut  
imagining possibilities with each breath that may  
or may not be inhaled or exhaled, planets unfurl into being  
spring from nightmares, this is a dream. This is real.

Skin blisters as universes and allegories  
simultaneously burst into flames, there is  
something coming there is nothing this  
is an ending. Let's begin with this.

# Shawn Chang

## **Dreamland**

A dreamland in another life, in lore,  
Without the rubble, rocks of carnage spill'd,  
Where love doth live with life forevermore,  
Amid a golden Garden - wish-fulfill'd.

Within a thousand times, and thrice reborn,  
Again we meet, discreet, our love to be,  
Beneath the moon, so fair yet far, forlorn;  
Th' eternal vow between us, you and me.

Beyond the weeping streams of many a tear,  
The love, undying, doth ensue in haste;  
For one to th' other hold in dearth of fear -  
A joy to be, to hold a maiden chaste.

Despair not when we're set again apart,  
For all may die but ne'er the soul nor heart.

## **In Pallid Light**

The ocean is halcyon tonight; near many a neglected sand dune,  
The flowing plane in pallid light reflects the mournful midnight moon.

Near many a neglected sand dune, rippling surface of waters clear  
Reflects the mournful midnight moon that's in its own turn dark and drear.

Rippling surface of waters clear, carrying a song of anguish  
That's in its own turn dark and drear, is lifeless as the waves languish.

Carrying a song of anguish, the moon's reflection, faint but fair,  
Is lifeless as the waves languish with a sorrow beyond despair.

The moon's reflection, faint but fair, shifted by pebbles tossed to land,  
With a sorrow beyond despair, that adorns the lorn dunes of sand.

Shifted by pebbles tossed to land, again, once more, again, once more,  
That adorns the lorn dunes of sand; the surface sends grief to the shore.

Again, once more, again, once more, the note of woe creeps from the deep;  
The surface sends grief to the shore, lulling the waters back to sleep.

The note of woe creeps from the deep; and sent to the waves' bounds afar,  
Lulling the waters back to sleep is the fate foretold by a star.

And sent to the waves' bounds afar, spreading before one's turbid eyes,  
Is the fate foretold by a star; what's beneath the sad moonlit skies?

Spreading before one's turbid eyes, the ocean is halcyon tonight.  
What's beneath the sad moonlit skies? The flowing plane in pallid light.

# SIMON PERCHIK

\*

Struggling against more turbulence  
this broken concrete can't shut down  
and cool –your shadow's too old

leans down and though the wall  
falls closer and closer  
it tries to rest your face

–a sleeping face  
still circling where your forehead  
mingles with rocks and weeds

–even your grave goes to pot  
lets anyone point at it  
as if sunlight could urge you

to spread out inside a sky  
that has no days left, is lifted  
face to face with the ground.

\*

An everyday rain is not enough  
but even so these strangers  
walk past your grave

and below the black umbrellas  
cling to each other  
as that homeless cry

slowly closing around you  
and though you can't hear it  
the sky is already dark, sags

and under the small rocks  
that come here empty handed  
—such a rain loses count

is no longer in pieces  
could comfort you  
remember its darkness.

\*

This path could be its echo  
clings to your exhausted cry  
and once around one shoulder

climbs, covers the Earth  
already those footsteps  
mourners will use

follow as emptiness  
and not answer anymore  
or look :this path

coming back with stars  
that no longer listen  
over and over.

\*

And though it's dark these dead  
still remember how every stone  
smells from dirt that never leaves

becomes a sky without an evening  
they can hold in one hand  
and not the other –they call out

with valleys :cries that have forgotten  
to rise far off as sunlight  
and trembling –these dead want snow

side by side, already flowers  
and lowered, opened at the throat  
and no longer breathing.

\*

You show up late as usual  
need more darkness  
though you wait

the way each star  
smells from dirt  
and her eyelids

–the mouth you return to  
is already weeds  
worn down by the silence

that's lost its balance  
can't escape  
and won't let go

–some nights  
further than others  
smaller and smaller.

# Mark Young

## A line from Pérez Prado

Some sort of ad-  
block or antivirus  
app sheds light  
on a millennia of

decreasing deep-  
sea webcams. The  
target of reducing  
by half beautiful

competitions on  
your online store  
has been met. To  
minimize poverty

rates I bet you've  
used some sort of  
gleam that moist-  
urizes mane & tail.

***geographies: Basra***

Redeployed personnel  
from the redundant  
media so cherish  
what they have

they are ready  
to fight the state-  
owned railroads  
from house to house.

**A / publicly scrutinized / underwater search ends**

Many trendy sports bars  
have no morals, terrible

customer service & average  
food, yet manage to travel

from one country to another  
with surprising frequency.

## **Irascible**

Most meanings of  
the word descend  
from clunky antonyms

found only in Spanish-  
English dictionaries  
or in authoritative

archival audio recordings  
of forum discussions  
in proto-Catalan.

## **like / swimming in / a tropical paradise**

The thread is exactly as it says. Given a removal reason flair or comment; given the variety & number of fabrics, stains, & uses; given the tilings of a colored pattern can be understood to be analogous to a horse's natural behavior

patterns—crib-biting, or box-walking; given any given point inside a hexagon mimics the musical notes & tempo of an arrow head in deep magenta, anybody can ask a question.

## **The Challenges of a New Golden Age**

I have taped my hand  
to Grandma's forehead,  
my coat pocket is the  
place where I keep my  
model planes. I have no  
access to my mind—it's

completely invisible.  
Most of my lunchtimes  
are spent on a syndicated  
Fox Sports Radio show  
where my performance  
will not be noticed. Later,

when the children are  
in bed, social media will  
often show a spike in click-  
through rates. I twig the  
reality & delete the tweet.  
It's time to soul-search.

# Patricia Walsh

## **Your Revolution**

Wherever the firing line extends to,  
Kings above water, in a tower of sorts  
Your people and history, sisters to the monarch  
Wearing roses under the cover of dusk

The burning of a native city flummoxes you,  
Resurrection man that you are.  
Machine-feeding the rose-red empire  
A souterrain for the ungodly, a forgotten skeleton.

Private heritage, the battle-lines drawn  
Herbal cures try to nuke the relevant cancer  
Backing into the wild an event to note  
Super-bugs a delusion in mapping the mind.

Celtic destruction where none existed.  
Making of the fittest a cry of the wild  
Fetishing trees for all they are worth  
Statistically gunning for a synthetic past.

Children of the stars, death of the virgins  
Illustrated history a nice addition  
Coffee-tabled to within an inch of its life  
Invisible to the interested, a planet demoted.

Some voyage keeps you sweet, a master switch  
Men biting dogs an occurrence to savour  
Locality calling on a glorious madness  
Promotion on eventuality, a pat on the head.

## **Expanding Rebel**

Hiding in plain sight, the furies  
Catcall a lost cause  
Forever losing monsters at a stroke  
After such knowledge, falling flat  
A small town near oblivion boasts a long war.

Wheresoever the firing line extends  
A solitary cold fish is a lesser evil  
Breaking ice over nibbles and drinks  
Containing embarrassment for a spell at least  
A pimpernel saving the privileged class.

Loved to hell but not back, mislaid  
Bulging suitcases bring back the days  
Of good neighbours, rest being history  
Hitting culture where needed, a fruitful exercise  
One's tragedy is another's indifference.

Searching for salvation in a wounded heart  
Operation behind the wire a master lost  
Unknown soldiers grab the enemy by the ankle  
Having lived with the enemy for too long  
In living colour, orderly and humane.

Higher forms of murder, born survivors  
Planets of memory err on currency  
Propaganda exercises, dead being awakened  
Campaigns of godless militants, forget victory  
Eyewitness trouble at an arm's length.

## **As History and Warning**

We are the people, an unfaithful tribe  
Still being picky over a twisted root  
Times of our lives resurrected  
A history being bunk, a catalogue of spite  
Blood on the banner a close second.

Boycotting what doesn't suit us, voices of place  
Gone to ground, to seed, frankly obliterating  
The hidden children, parallels once too often  
A city in wartime ekes out smartphones  
Surreptitious laundry an agent of culture.

Time-master and arsonist punctuate the great war  
Allies to hand, born survivors  
Good neighbours' housekeeping, landscapes  
Stroll past on the train, trite existence  
Lost masters a lesson in decorum.

Searching for a saviour, all but our lives  
Awash in some cold fish, swimming in a bucket  
Silently rebelling against some boat  
Rocked to breaking some promise at will  
Conquering domestic status in colour.

Orderly and human, all right for some  
To preach frugality and the simple life  
The greater evil hoped for, a broken world  
Higher form of chattels secure a place  
In the world at large, a square of sky.

## **Blood Running Cold**

Calling time on your nemesis.  
Drinking like fury at last orders  
Interrogating friends a common purpose.

Things said over a shadow of a pint  
Reconcile nothing, not even sleep,  
Tears find a way onto your pillow.

A flummoxed face, a goodbye bespoke  
Met with incredulity over coffee  
Smoke blown into an unrepentant face.

On a self-made island, sport while you may  
I give birth to problems, a spinning yarn,  
You not caring besides the perfunctory.

I could stay forever, jokes permitting.  
Singular promises eat through the heart  
Munching on soul a lost energy.

Working on the sodden ground  
Witnessing your prize on the outskirts  
A glory she is, pitching in at will.

Marriage seals the deal. Lying cold  
Not thinking of parallels to assuage the situation  
Nor perfection through a cracked eyeball.

# Changming Yuan

## Hooking

Just how, you were thrown into the water  
Under the current and close to a snag

You can't feel the sun light  
Without being reflected

When a fish swims by here  
You run into a nasty urchin, tantalizing

As we are all being tantalized  
For a tiny catch

## **Towards Tao**

With a storm  
With a gull  
With your breath

Goes the thought  
With a vague vision  
Beyond the bogland

With your heart  
Hawking aloud in the wild  
With dripping blood

An unformed concept  
A shoal of consciousness  
Bubbling with feeling

With a photon  
With a quantum  
With your mind concentrated  
On a twisted other

## Daoist Pursuit

To/To  
Seek/Balance  
Yang/Yin  
From/With  
Yin/Yang  
Is/Isn't  
The same/The same  
As/As  
To/To  
Seek/Balance  
Yin/Yang  
From/With  
Yang/Yin  
Before/Unless  
We/You  
Zigzag/Zagzig  
Our Path/Your Way  
With/Without  
A thought/Any feeling  
About/Towards  
Nature/God

## **Reforming**

Can't you de-louse a rat?  
Doesn't matter. Neither can I  
But we can untie our own hairstyle  
Putting a little makeup if we want to  
Or going for some plastic surgery

Better to cut off our whiskers  
Or tails, biting pebbles  
Instead of cloth or wood  
Even to replace our hearts  
With a cat's

## **Natural Ironies (2)**

### *1/ Snagging*

You have long since died  
But you will never fall

Standing deadly among leafy growths  
Your body embodies a rebirth  
Greening close to your rotten cycles

### *2/ Moonbow*

Few humans look up  
At you, but you reflect  
And refract just as many colors  
As much beauty as a sunbow

With little warmth of the day  
But countless secrets about darkness

### *3/ Whale*

You hope to make a loud last call that  
Reaches

Far beyond yourself, on yourself, yourself reachable; an  
Agitated

Vociferous spirit in the Pacific, cruising  
Under night currents, yell

As if for an echo, though too loud to be heard  
For the un-whale like

## **The Art of Autumn**

Rather than the foil  
Of spring flowers  
All leaves of the passing season  
Are now blooming aloud  
Towards the autumn sky

Less tender textured, perhaps  
But more brittle, more deadly brilliant  
Shaken off for a last ritual dance  
With the wind before they kiss  
The land once and forever

# R. N. Taber

## AGE, A GROWING SENSE OF WHERE REASON FEARS TO TREAD

Days, weeks, years,  
stretching across a wasteland  
like a disused rail track  
where ghosts play  
at mind games to confuse us  
about time lines

Time lines, in a haze  
of remembrance playing fast  
and loose with Memory  
where conscience  
pulls our strings and leads us  
into shadowy places

In shadowy places,  
wandering as lost and alone  
as a child whose parent  
has, just for a moment  
let fall the clinging hand  
into unbearable space

An unbearable space,  
this freedom once longed for  
with, oh, such passion,  
promising the rush  
of adrenalin sure to come  
with responsibility

Responsibility, moral  
obligations where bucks stop  
at a scary self-searching  
where none so blind  
as dare not see, play deaf  
to home truths

Home truths, eroding  
comfort zones, pulling rugs  
from under feet bent  
on standing up

to be seen scoring points  
over alternatives

Alternatives, for better  
or worse, we'll never know  
unless given a voice,  
allowed to speak up  
put their case from heart,  
mind and spirit

Heart, mind and spirit.  
stretching across a wasteland  
like a disused rail track  
where ghosts play  
at mind games to confuse us  
about unshed tears

## **BY WAY OF MARKING OLD AGE**

By way of marking old age  
(after much reflecting)  
time edges us off-stage

Like a bird returned to its cage,  
we'll flex a feisty wing  
by way of marking old age

Letting slip that life's last page  
makes good reading,  
time edges us off-stage

Let's not pass cliché and adage  
off as living...  
by way of marking old age

Inspired by a well-honed rage,  
its humanity enduring...  
time edges us off-stage

No matter memory skips a page,  
its poetry re-working;  
by way of marking old age  
time edges us off-stage

## **G-A-Y, GROWING OLD WITH PRIDE**

Much of life may have passed me by,  
much of love left me (so) alone,  
much of truth left me high and dry,  
its flair for logic cut me to the bone

Much of time has seen dreams fail me,  
much of space left me in freefall,  
much of dogma done its best to nail me  
to this tarred fence, that graffiti wall

Much of society, I'd prefer not to serve  
much as a sentence without parole;  
much of the world, we can but observe  
turns on china plate or begging bowl

Much of my body has failed to treasure  
harvest moons stumbled across,  
much of my mind, to conventions told  
a lion's share of lies...at no great loss

Yet, for the life of me, adrenalin flows  
for the loves it has known and live on  
where a Joy of Being flowers and grows,  
regardless of time, space, or reason

For much of me looking back with regret,  
more of me lives for each new day;  
more of me still, to nature, forever in debt,  
not least for birthing me human and gay

## **L-O-V-E, DEFINING THE AGELESS QUALITY OF AGEING**

If strands of grey in the hair turning white  
and less subtle laughter lines in the face,  
you smile, and my world is filled with light,  
as tired limbs summon dignity and grace

If the voice sounding weaker than before,  
its familiar lilt still sweet on the ear,  
so the heart can but listen out for more,  
happiest for knowing we're together...

Time ever parts the world's lovers too soon,  
yet nurture of nature will have its way,  
and who seeks among craters of the moon  
will find flowers we planted there today

In good times and bad, see love's light endure,  
nor shall even death's tears its vision blur

## **RHETORIC OF MORTALITY, POETRY OF LIFE**

Come a time I'll close my eyes forever,  
never again observe a waking day,  
think of me with love as a new sun rises,  
and weep not, but look for me there

Come a time I'll close my ears forever.  
hear dawn's sweet chorus no more,  
think of me as heavens make glad music,  
and weep not, but listen for me there

Come a time my senses fail me forever,  
never again smell a rain-kissed earth,  
think of me as flowers open their petals,  
and weep not, but walk with me there

Come a time we'll have run life's gamut,  
may the dream that was ours never fade,  
but merge into Earth Mother's natural art

created for all our sakes and we for it

**SENIOR MOMENTS or GROWING OLD WITH CHUCKLES**  
**(No, Chuckles is not my cat.)**

This little poem of mine  
may well be missing the occasional line;  
since senior moments with me  
are as common as sugar or milk in a cup  
of tea or coffee

Whenever out and about,  
I rely on my trusty walking stick's support,  
but will often raise the alarm  
when I put it aside and it chooses to hide  
(usually on my arm)

An easy to follow recipe  
(meant to impress old friends visiting me)  
might well prove a mistake  
when I get proportions sufficiently wrong  
to make us all feel sick

I have hurried for buses  
only to find I'm soon counting my losses  
for its heading (miles) away  
from whatever destination I'd had in mind  
or forgetting *that* anyway

A positive thinking person,  
I refuse to let senior moments get me down,  
but love to laugh at them  
among friends over a few drinks in the pub,  
ever toasting, 'Carpe Diem'

# Post Scriptum

## **Alone**

**by RD Larson**

Sunlight shafts my heart

while darkness lingers

and danger walks.

I say I bleed- but

You can't know.

Sunlight hides my pain

while cold fingers

and danger calls.

I say I die- but

You can't hear.

Fear rides the sun

Across the sky

and danger waits.

I say I know- but

You can't tell.

Darkness swallows me

while sunlight fades

and danger slips

in beside me- but

You can't feel.

Nighttime slices my soul

while darkness stays

and danger calls.

I say wake me-but

You only sleep.

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