

# Yggdrasil

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# Introduction

Michael Marrotti

## **'Testament To Bad Writing'**

This poem  
is a testament  
to bad writing  
It's here  
for your  
entertainment  
like a hitchhiker  
to Ted Bundy  
I conceived it  
in the bathroom  
after a hearty  
meal at  
McDonald's  
I wiped  
only twice  
leaving  
remnants  
of feces  
attached  
to my ass  
for the sole  
purpose of  
inspiration  
Behold  
here it is  
What should  
have been  
properly  
disposed of  
in the bathroom  
is now a piece  
of poetry  
'Power Of Poetry'

I've been  
living to die  
in Pittsburgh  
as I shit out  
lousy poetry  
Juggling two  
different lovers  
all in the name  
of inspiration  
My dealer has  
been picking up  
the phone  
in compliance  
to my mental  
instability  
If the power  
of poetry  
could heal  
the world  
all you  
liberals  
wouldn't have  
anything to  
talk about  
It would require  
clever writing  
to accomplish  
that fantasy  
with the way  
that's going  
I'll live to see  
the immolation  
of this entire  
poetic planet  
'In The Name Of Bad Taste'  
Maybe  
I'll get some  
accolades  
if I reach inside  
my asshole  
smear it on a  
piece of paper  
and call it art  
My muse  
is obviously  
inefficient  
I bet I could  
find inspiration

in a pile of  
dirty cat litter  
I'm through  
with using  
mouthwash  
it's not doing  
me any favors  
This toothbrush  
is not my friend  
I plan on using  
dental floss  
to hang myself  
in the hopes  
of meeting  
a deceased poet  
since the vast  
majority of  
neoteric poetry  
isn't producing  
anything worthwhile

---

# John Grey

## A C.E.O. CAMPING TRIP

They make camp  
in a deep forest clearing.  
Tents are pitched.  
With the sinking sun,  
wood is gathered  
and a fire is lit.  
A change has come upon one and all.  
The chief stockholders of large companies  
are now the minor stockholders of their surrounds.

Tonight.  
they'll cook hamburgers,  
hark back to the time  
they first read Thoreau.  
While one picks burrs  
out his sweater,  
another will toast  
Teddy Roosevelt  
and his national parks program.  
And when the talk goes silent,  
they'll listen to trees whisper,  
animals skirt their surrounds.

Tomorrow,  
they will awaken,  
isolated but not alone,  
and the day being Sunday,  
they'll give thanks to their spiritual gods.  
Why not?  
The light through the canopy  
will construct a cathedral around them.

For now,  
fire rises in their midst  
and, in a rough-voiced choir,  
they sing old folk songs,  
tunes about the tyranny  
of people like themselves.

They know the words.  
They just don't recognize them.

## THE OLD SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

He can remember  
shoe-shine boys,  
a stand around the corner  
from the five and dime,  
where an old black man  
shined up his leather  
to the point where  
he could see his reflection in it....  
and all for a quarter -

his nostalgia puts me in a quandary -  
is it his early manhood he longs for,  
how he caught the eye  
strutting down the sidewalk  
looking dapper as Rhett Butler?  
or some idealized antebellum South  
when every black man knew his place?

he just says,  
you wouldn't believe what you could get  
for a quarter in those days -  
at last,  
a memory of his  
I'm comfortable with.

## YOUNG PARENTS

So now he's a figure of authority.  
Where did the years go?  
The truth is that they went nowhere.  
Haven't happened yet in fact.  
His own body is still growing.  
His chin is barely at the stage of growing fir.

He has a partner in this -  
Amy, barely of age.  
But, in the bright light,  
neither can get over  
the strangeness of the other.

And they can't keep their eyes  
off the white flesh in the crib.  
Their shadows overlay  
the curious sleeping body.

It's as much a puzzle as their hearts.

Strange, they can deal with.  
But it's improbable they can't abide.



# Michael Ceraolo

## **Modern Olympian Ode #9: The Great Race (1908)**

Before the politics-through-sport  
between the United States and China,  
before the politics-through-sport  
of the so-called Cold War,  
before the politics-through-sport  
of the Nazi Games,  
there was the politics-through-sport  
between the day's greatest empire  
and the upstart empire aspirant,  
to be conducted on the reigning empire's home turf,  
to be conducted most stunningly in the marathon

The Olympic organizers  
decided to start the race at Windsor Castle  
and plotted a route through the streets  
that totaled exactly twenty-six miles  
when it entered the Olympic stadium,  
where the runners would then go  
another three hundred eighty-five yards  
so the finish line would be in front of the royal box  
(this would be the first marathon of this distance,  
a distance still current as of this writing)

Fifty-five runners started the race,  
thirteen of them British,  
with the United States and Canada  
also having more runners entered  
than the current limit of three per country;  
in all sixteen countries would be represented  
The Brits hoped to uphold the tradition  
of a host-country runner winning the race  
(three of the four to date)

One by one,  
all the British hopefuls,  
which included all the runners  
from dominions such as Canada  
and colonies such as South Africa,  
dropped out of gold-medal contention  
or dropped out of the race entirely  
(twenty-eight runners would finish the race)  
The first runner to enter the stadium,

the Italian Dorando Pietri,  
became an honorary Brit to the crowd,  
now rooting for anybody but the American Johnny Hayes,  
who was now in second place

But Pietri has hit the wall  
Shortly after reaching the track  
he falls,  
then gets up on his own

Falls again,  
this time is helped up  
by race officials including the doctor

Falls a third time,  
is given some sort of stimulant

Falls a fourth time,  
gets up on his own,  
but by this time  
Hayes has entered the stadium  
and is running freely and easily  
toward the finish line

Pietri falls a fifth time,  
the doctor massages his legs,  
massages his chest,  
with help lifts him yet again,  
and Pietri is practically carried  
across the finish line,  
thirty-two seconds ahead of Hayes

Pietri was disqualified after a protest,  
and Hayes earned his deserved gold medal,  
though there was some grumbling by the Brits  
that the protest was 'unsportsmanlike'  
But the sort of pseudo-sportsmanship  
that said that one should just  
quietly accept the cheating of others  
rightly never caught on

**Modern Olympian Ode #10: Boxing Judges (2012)**

For this Olympiad,  
and going back to the beginning  
and ahead to whenever the end is,  
let us have eternal silence  
for those martyrs to incompetence  
For whether said incompetence  
was in service of another cause  
or displayed for its own sake,  
their decisions were deemed so egregious  
their cohorts in the noble profession  
where corrupt incompetence was almost a prerequisite  
couldn't countenance certain results

### **Modern Olympian Ode #11: What's In a Name? (1936)**

The International Olympic Committee  
and an engraving on a stone pillar  
outside the Olympic stadium in Berlin  
both list this year's marathon winner  
as Kitei Son of Japan  
But Son was actually Sohn Kee-Chung of Korea,  
forced to take a Japanese name  
(though he signed in under his real name),  
forced to run under the flag of Japan  
because Japan had Korea  
under its thumb at the time,  
and because the IOC mandated  
that all athletes must have a national affiliation  
After winning in a record time,  
Sohn bowed his head in shame while on the medal stand,  
shame at having to hear the Japanese national anthem played  
And so there would be no mistaking that gesture  
for one of reverence,  
Sohn told the media afterward  
what he had done and why he had done it  
The Japanese officials didn't mistake what they had seen:  
they banned Sohn for competitions  
(competing for Japan anyway)  
for life  
And despite repeated requests to do so,  
despite pretending to be beyond politics,  
the IOC has yet to acknowledge  
the correct name of the 1936 marathon champion  
or do anything to change the Berlin engraving

# Alexei Vesselov

## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

### Point one

#### THE INTERNATIONALISTS MEMORIAL PARK

I

The wind  
Rolls  
Spherical willows  
through the field.

Crunchy sand  
Under gray ice.

II

The last ice  
On the pond.  
Leaden-shaded  
Underlying traces  
Of yesterday's  
Ski tracks.

III

Lonely tram  
At the station booth.

IIII

Noise of the avenue  
Is left behind.  
Cold reed  
Converses in whispers.

V

When  
Grebes and ducks  
Will come back  
To the water again  
I'll write  
Something new.

VI

It's raining  
Over the hills.  
Shadows of trees  
On the white void.

VII

The hesitant man  
On the big puddle's shore.  
Ever more lights  
Behind  
The Southern highway.

VIII

Cold ways  
Between the hills  
Under the low sky.

## Point two

### SHREVENPARK

I  
Martin Luther's  
Church bell  
Is singing  
Alone  
For the weeping willow.

II  
Barefooted man  
On the bench  
Is looking at the meadow,  
Is looking  
At geese and mews.

III  
Skilful players,  
Sophisticated audience.  
Bums  
Of metal balls.  
The Big Game  
On the bowling alley.

IIII  
The smell of smoke,  
The meadow  
Getting cool.  
This summer  
Saturday night.  
The lantern  
Slowly blinking  
In the twilight.

V  
Ducks and ducklings,  
Geese and goslings  
And me  
In the  
Middle  
Of the lawn.

### **Point three**

#### **KURAKIN DACHA GARDEN**

I  
The sunlit  
Fluff of cottonwoods  
Flies.  
Thoughtful  
Walks the yardman  
Along the wall.

II  
The picture from my childhood:  
In asphalt ring  
The barren apple trees  
In bloom.

III  
Glossy trunks.  
The sun  
Dried out the cavin.

IIII  
The whirl of cars  
Is being  
Muffled up  
By bird's twitter,  
By people's voices.

V  
"Like a toy" –  
Looking at the car  
From behind  
Old apple trees.

VI  
Meek aged apple trees.

VII  
Young swiftness of cottonwoods.

VIII  
Gentle wisdom of lindens.

VIII  
Refinement of euonymus.



X

Delicate riot of dog rose.

XI

Treachery of stinging nettle.

XII

Frequent attack of buttercups.

XIII

Shyness of green grass.

XIII

Silver and diamonds:

Horseflies

Sitting on stubs.

XV

A little bug flies

Between the pages...

**Point four**

**DUSTERNBROOK WOOD**

I

Breathing of the soil.  
Previous autumn  
In the second ravine.

II

The long path  
To the hollow.  
Unknown trees  
Are looking friendly.

III

I've been in autumn  
Two hours more.  
I've shorten  
My way  
Through the wood.

**Point five**

**SUMMER GARDEN**

As well  
As Pushkin  
I'm here  
At home.

**Point six**

**ANDREAS GAYK WOOD**

I  
Last year's leaf  
Is rolling  
Along  
The yellow brick path.

II  
The Wind.  
Holed  
Crow's nests.

III  
Yellow-eyed  
Blackbird  
Crosses the road.  
And I  
Must go home too.

## **Point seven**

### **HAMBURG SQUARE WASTE GROUND**

I

The Rebar  
Basks in the sun.

II

Holes,  
Willows,  
Dusty roads.  
Someone  
Having a nap.

III

The tasks  
Are driven  
Into the lazy summer day.  
Debris  
Are driven  
Into the trail.  
Swell  
Traffic jam  
On the avenue.

# SIMON PERCHIK

\*

Though the one you had your eye on  
is rising north to south  
the small star you thought died off

moves side to side slowly behind  
the way an ancient blessing  
still warns the absent moon

against those dark corners  
all marble rubs across  
becomes a single stone

that divides itself in two, here  
an empty breast, there  
the child is already dead

--you dress for this  
bring the new scarf, new gloves  
for what was evening once

was lullaby :the dirt  
east to west, clumps  
shining all around a place

already freed from the Earth  
--new boots, new coat :a constellation  
never here before, still cold.

\*

This flag, as the saying goes  
smacks from the sun  
so you salute, can use the shade

though by the time the parade cools  
your fingers ache from holding up  
a lovingly carved radio that once

was a woman whose voluptuous breasts  
still feed you music from the forties  
--love songs for common prayer

as if July, too heavy to bear  
spreads out on every lawn  
and by the 4th day you are listening

the way loneliness is fed, the Earth  
turning you slowly on course  
corrects for winds and nourishment.

\*

You're new at this  
though in front each window  
your eyes close just so far

are not used to a rain  
that comes right up against you  
won't move even when you make room

once you learn where to look  
for the sky, for the shoreline  
half gone ahead, half

peeling off and your fingers  
clamp on to its sharp turn  
covered with sand and thirst and death

--you never know  
but this rain is dangerous  
has saved its memory for last

put all its strength  
in how to circle you down  
as days and nights together.



\*

Without any flowers  
you are still breathing  
--without a throat

still eating the warm air  
though what's left from the sun  
is no longer blue

hides the way your grave  
is covered with stones  
and still hungry

--you could use more stones  
a heaviness to become your arms  
one for working harder

the other invisible  
leaving your heart  
lifts from the dirt

your mouth, your eyes  
and the sky letting go the Earth  
as if you weigh too much.

\*

As if it finished its last meal this log  
sits back, waits inside for the stove  
the way ashes roll over and all around you

trees are burning on rivers  
that came from the first fire  
still settling down as thirst

and the heady smoke flames leave behind  
to be remembered by --from day one  
their slow climbing turns, at first

threatening to gut the place and now  
you can't live without them though your fingers  
after so many years have become airborne

safe from the dangerous shadows all night  
dripping between each breath and your mouth  
left open --you pour in wood

to get death started :an arriving flame  
surrounded by the Earth and tiny holes  
--it's the only way you know how.

# Thomas M. McDade

## A Vietnam War Memorial Wall Fantasy

Visitors cry, embrace and pray on both  
knees or one, standing too  
as if they've just gotten the news.  
Notes, photos, poems, art, flowers  
real and fake, are placed against  
the shiny panels citing the slaughtered.

Staring, stoic souls lacking any fallen  
and feeling oddly out of place  
adopt a patch  
of random warriors.  
Mouthing names, they wonder hard  
if so-and-so could possibly be

the very same one as they rush  
to shelters housing pages sealed  
in plastic: names, home states,  
wall locales and one might conjure up  
a thriller plot featuring phone  
books, every last number

no longer in service.  
Relieved or rattled they return,  
count across, finger the rows  
from bottom up nearly tripping  
over tots whom they hope never  
suffer war's math and alphabet.

A girl perhaps just turned teen  
smiles through braces, slowly  
slides along, arms outstretched  
as if a protestor occupying  
a federal building ledge  
as her backside skims

the hallowed engravings, despite  
stunned faces she carries on.  
Is this a symbolic erasure?

An act borrowed from a fiction: say  
shrinking and sprouting Rabbit-Hole Alice.  
Will this restless kid vary

in height from inches  
up to the ten-foot-three Wall height  
and back until the grieving  
granite is thankfully blank quirky art  
fit for preening and bouncing tennis balls.  
An incredibly buxom woman, hair band like the mushroom  
munching wonderland kid wears,  
sports a T-shirt that brags,  
GOOD THINGS COME IN PAIRS –  
no doubt she'd welcome a fantasy census  
enhancement come true, 58,000 and more  
she'd boast she'd be ably up to suckling.

## Hard-Boiled Eggs

They'll keep your marbles rowed  
Sync, style and stir your heart  
Your sense of humor will soar  
A chic cashmere beret a halo  
Bravos and deafening applause  
Will trail not only your poetry  
But your have-a-nice-days  
Neighbors will leave six-packs  
And fresh fat mocha éclairs  
At your door and in your car  
College girls will memorize  
Collar, inseam, shoulder, waist  
Rob boyfriends' fancy duds  
Pay to have tailored what's off  
Beg to share wall, floor or bed  
Hollywood stars will flub lines  
Athletes will go butterfingers  
Merely sensing that you exist  
If you ever die, rare silver  
Coins will grace your eyes  
But the odds are slender as  
Men rated high on violence  
That resolved to crown crime  
Their straight and narrow  
Will knuckle, shoot and slice  
Gag the poached and shirred  
Just to be your bodyguards

## Advice

Lonely as the last railroad  
spike in gravel,  
relic of brakeman error.  
A billboard advising  
BUCKLE UP –  
COMMON SENSE  
FOR ALL –  
A rusty trestle,  
and a single birch  
so slim one could ring  
a thumb and index  
finger around,  
Scarred and pecked  
fit for a kid's bark  
model canoe project.  
Good posture though  
too sparsely branched  
for snow to buckle  
but molting  
like a strange child's  
bedroom wallpaper  
slithered and curling  
its various vipers  
from edges.  
Dalmatians poorly heeling  
for the sensitive type.  
Pure camouflage  
sitting ducks for lightning  
Think painter rags,  
mildewed  
wedding gowns,  
mold mottled licorice  
dingy nurse  
and chef outfits.  
Velocity joins light to refine  
or silhouette along with mutual  
perusing — a footnote advises  
SPEED LIMIT  
ENFORCED BY  
AIRCRAFT.

## Pistols and Paces

I found my second master  
hand-walker, Val Veen,  
in Nabokov's novel, *Ada*.  
The first during pickled eggs  
and potato chips, washed  
down with screwdrivers  
at the Bishop Bend Club.  
The bartender broke stale  
morning silence with a tale  
of payday dye house drinkers  
betting on a man successfully strolling  
the length of the bar on his hands.  
When he named the acrobat I did not  
acknowledge that performer  
was my Uncle Jim or that his  
acrobatic skill was not a family trait.  
I *have* mastered standing  
on my head trying to please  
some folks not worth a bent elbow—  
a talent no fool would wager on  
and surely not fit for narration  
no matter how maddening a quiet.  
Val Veen worried about losing  
his upside down talent after suffering  
a wound in a duel.  
This fact best kept to oneself  
along with knowledge of Val  
and author, in your average  
morning drinking barroom,  
not that owning up  
would result in pistols  
and paces, more likely  
an embarrassing fat lip  
I suppose, but I'd lay odds  
my Uncle Jim would not fail  
to buy the uppity S.O.B.  
a shot of vodka,  
nephew or not.

## From Bottom Down

Scuffed and cobbled  
Tossed families,  
Friends, acquaintances  
And enemies worn thin  
Their memories  
Of us erased, expired  
Or merely flapping,  
Eyelet pallbearers  
Splayed aglet obituaries  
But the deceased do  
Trod on, in *our* notions  
Dreams and fancies  
Sized up narrow, wide  
Or orthopedic, black  
White, brown, canvas  
Name the dye  
Sandaled according  
To cortex footfalls  
Lace, Velcro, slip on  
Sure as stepping  
On gum or scat  
Comes a time  
When bending  
To brush or brightly  
Shine is intolerable—  
Pitiful reminders  
Of the panoramas  
Of those stepped  
Kicked, tramped upon  
Like roaches or ants  
Until poof or pop  
A heel Rubber  
Or leather  
High or low tossed  
Into dementia  
Or Alzheimer's  
Shredder  
Tongues bound  
Too tight  
Hazy parades  
Of dollar store  
Flip-flops toppling  
Arches



## Postcard Shy

My aunt gave me holy hell  
for not writing a postcard home.  
They embarrassed me hinting  
they knew I was the one pissed  
on the outhouse seat.  
There were odd glances  
as I revealed there were no dress  
clothes for church in my brittle  
cardboard Coast Guard suitcase  
my father borrowed  
from a bartender pal.  
They couldn't fathom my hate  
of fried eggs crusted brown  
on the edges like plastic  
or my flubs playing cards  
according to Hoyle  
and not my housing  
project rules or my snubbing  
their stupid rainy day talent show.  
When my attempt at an Olympic  
dive off the pier ended  
in a belly flop I recall  
"it figures" in my uncle's eyes.  
There was a great speedboat ride  
and I caught a foot long yellow perch.  
I skippered a canoe alone  
and didn't care that it was  
connected to a pole on shore  
by a long rope that twanged  
"We don't trust you"  
as it whiplashed me out  
of an escape daydream.  
Memories of that first and only  
vacation of my youth followed me  
through my Navy years.  
I flooded my folks with postcards  
and stormy times at sea, I often wished  
my ship were leashed to a pier.

# 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.



# Alexei Vesselov

## DOG ROSE

\*\*\*

The fresh trench  
Is wrapped up  
In red net.  
The fuss  
Of the road men,  
Clouds of dust,  
Clouds of pigeons.  
The Sun  
Stands still  
At the crossroads.

\*\*\*

Too many Treasures  
I left  
In the last summer!  
For what  
Beautiful reason  
I'll wish  
To come back  
To this very moment?

\*\*\*

The Dust  
Flies from the highway.  
The dog rose  
In the summer city.

\*\*\*

Street signs  
For plumbing and hydrants.  
They are like hieroglyphs  
On the rice paper  
Of urban summer.

## MIKHAILOVSKY GARDENS

Instead  
Of black swans  
The pigeons  
Are sitting  
For the tourists.

\*\*\*

"The Game in Hell"  
And the mass culture:  
After reading  
The book by Kruchonykh\*  
I'm playing  
Doom II.  
It's rather hot outside.

\*\*\*

My thoughts  
Are running faster  
Than my train.  
Endless  
telegraph wire.

\*\*\*

Tick-tock  
On the display –  
Another day is over.  
Speed: 0 mph.  
The platform.  
Slow light  
Of the slow Moon.

\*\*\*

The lights  
Behind the hump.  
Warm wind  
Blows  
Into the bus window.  
The one  
For everyone –  
The summer  
Like a single day  
On the loose.

# Beate Sigriddaughter

## MY LIFE

### Chapter I: Magic

I fed on fairytales and, with his permission,  
ate from the German Shepherd's dish.

### Chapter II: Family Life

My father was by far the favorite child.  
I couldn't wait to go to school.

### Chapter III: School

Magic—I could alphabetize the world  
and read it up in the branches of trees.

### Chapter IV: Heartache

When I showed my mother a story I wrote,  
she didn't know what to say.

### Chapter V: America

No matter how far I went, there I was.  
Boys were intoxicating and obligatory.

### Chapter VI: Poetry Class

My husband was afraid I wouldn't get in.  
It wasn't the only time I surprised him.

### Chapter VII: Marriage

I told him I'd be in his biography one day.  
"A footnote," he joked. We're not together now.

### Chapter VIII: Corporate Work

Selling your soul to the devil, you always  
believe you should have gotten a better price.

Chapter IX: Becky

I thought I loved her more than life,  
but, calmly, life reclaimed me over time.

Chapter X: Dance

I started my professional career at thirty-five,  
not great, perhaps, but certainly astonishing.

Chapter XI: Women

My mother must have been a goddess  
in disguise, because I want to worship everywhere.

Chapter XII: Spirit

I want.  
Why don't I know enough?

Chapter XIII: Now Until Death

I'd like to memorize the sun before I die.  
But, just in case, I'll celebrate it here.

## **NOT BELONGING**

they locked the gates  
of paradise

an angel of magnificence  
and masculinity  
looms tall with shining  
sword in evidence

outside the gates  
on the sidewalk

she so wanted to belong

## **CARROTS AND ROSES**

We have carrots and roses  
to remind us  
we too are not unworthy  
things in need of salvation.

# Gary Beck

## **Estimated Time of Departure**

The days grow shorter  
reflecting the passage  
to beckoning death  
patiently awaiting  
new arrivals.  
I join the procession  
of expiring lives,  
as reluctant as the others  
for departure,  
until fate determines  
the end of choice.

## **Forward Motion**

At first I lay helpless  
kicking and squirming,  
then I began grabbing  
followed by crawling.  
Independence day  
the first walk.

Then advanced movement  
faster and faster,  
mobility  
equaling freedom.  
Slowing down too soon  
time passing faster  
movement slower  
dwindling to a crawl,  
finally coming to a halt,  
no longer able to grab  
the threads of life.



## Literary Appraisal

Science fiction didn't exist  
until the 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
since before that  
life was stranger than fiction.  
As the Industrial Age  
radically changed  
daily existence,  
the fertile minds of man  
created escapes  
from machine clamors  
resonating  
from town to city  
where new inventions  
stupefied our senses  
not evolved enough  
for us to accept  
rapid innovation  
beyond comprehension  
of most mentalities,  
as we developed the habit  
of taking for granted  
what we didn't understand.

And as the Earth we knew  
rapidly changed,  
the need to huddle together  
accelerated,  
and we left the farms,  
left small towns,  
until great masses  
huddled together,  
more and more of us  
using advanced technology,  
advanced pharmacology,  
anything to suppress  
tribal anxiety,  
adaptation slower  
than innovation.

And as our excesses  
devoured Earth,  
science fiction  
once a weird prognostication  
of things to come

became increasingly morose,  
mirroring the lack of hope  
for a bright future  
on welcoming planets,  
instead preoccupied  
with unbenevolent lizards  
from Tau Ceti,  
other alien life forms  
always hostile,  
always threatening  
the existence of mankind,  
perhaps reflecting  
our basic nature,  
inimical to life,  
leaving us apprehensive  
of a dismal future.

## **Interference**

A few yellowing leaves  
linger dramatically  
on naked tree limbs,  
savoring the fading moments  
of seasonal change,  
and will not fall to earth  
but land on concrete,  
swept away, washed away,  
ground into dust,  
nutrition subtracted  
from the life cycle  
that should fertilize new growth  
continuing existence.

## **Condition Harsh**

Urban birds  
are smarter  
than country birds,  
because concrete,  
population density  
eradicates  
the food supply,  
so they have to be clever  
if they want to survive.  
After all,  
they can't sit on street corners  
holding tin cups  
begging for food,  
since people are too busy  
to stop  
and donate bird seed.

# Mark Young

## Geckoes &

She looked for ways  
in, but found them  
all occupied by poets  
or geckoes, the one  
making a fuss & the

other at one with  
the landscape. Never  
knew which was which  
until she started a poem  
beneath the time stamp,

& a gecko with its ET  
eyes peered down  
from the lintel & said,  
"Oh, I see you arrived  
after Frank O'Hara."

## **I'm building a new widget**

The program's main function is to return how much genetic data is exchanged when coyotes bite the throats of goats. The dinner table is ground zero. That's where so-

called deadstock are held before going to a rendering plant. How much will the market improve this season? Running a ranch does not necessarily make one an expert.

**day 2 of 3 away**

Took with him what  
he could but not all  
came. Closed his eyes

to get at the pictures  
in behind. Sunlight  
picked at his lids like

the ibis who came at  
first light, not to peck  
at the fallen avocados

in the field in behind  
but at the insects  
within. Curved beaks.

Emptiness. He could  
not settle in a place he  
could not call his own.

## **we're recapping the new footage**

A post-apocalyptic 2018 audio-visual experience dedicated to marketing & adtech startups

believes that offering charismatic species to the public could tarnish the reputation of any pristine

rainforest not crossed by oil pipelines owned by the last tribes in the world living in voluntary isolation.



### **a carnivorous epilog**

I feel about vaccinations the  
way a sphagnum bog feels  
about hunting manuals. I've  
been in something of a rut  
for the past few days—star-  
vation disrupts the peace;  
some new temple of Death  
Metal enters on a small boat;

the survivors have settled in.  
But, beware. The manticore still  
prowls the avenues of evening,  
in its ill-fitting suits, & with a  
tangerine visage highlighted by  
being beneath a bad comb over.

## **Ghosts**

It's a myth, this persistence  
of belief that ghosts are  
waiting to come tumbling  
down in the midnight, in  
the witching hour. Not  
that there are none – quite  
the opposite. Somewhere  
it is always midnight;  
& so there are always  
ghosts, the real & the cyber-  
real, friends & enemies.  
I know some of them. They  
have always haunted me.

Even now, in the late  
afternoon, there are ghosts  
sitting outside on the  
tamarind tree, eating the  
pods & dropping their  
droppings on the path  
below. Some seeds escape  
them. I sweep them up.  
Some seeds escape me,  
have fallen into the garden  
where they will grow. It  
is what I hate about ghosts.  
The leavings. The continuity.

# Post Scriptum

## Summah

By

RD Larson

oh dem summah time blues, dos days they driven me.  
Dey driven me to drinkin' rum and coco-malts.  
I usta think I was so so pure of heart.  
Now I knows this heart be dark wi' blood.  
When da summah times are here, dos days he was near.  
A-sure dey given me da sorry time blues  
I usta have me some fun times in da sun.  
I played like I was good; like a good girl.  
Now I knows I was a sinner afo' God. Dat evil man he cursed me; made my sun go black.  
He driven me from paradise I knowed so well.  
I usta be a partyin' girl with gold heart.  
Now I knows this heart to be a stone of sin. I's so sad  
I dint turn away; lets him finds elsewhere.  
But, laws, de summah was so hot and so was I,  
Grass so green, sun so bright; I was blinded.  
Now I knows I bein' dead to joy and pleasurin' Woes.  
Dem Damn Summah Time woes.

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