

# *Yggdrasil*

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HrEE LAHNG STRAH

# Introduction

## Bradley Mason Hamlin

### Delirium Tremens

always  
questions whispering  
crackling ears  
built by infinity of  
other people's  
thoughts  
ideas  
and your own  
mixing  
boxing against each other  
broken teeth  
broken rules  
constantly changing  
perception  
from Sammy Davis, Jr.  
to Saturday morning cartoons  
in a blink of eyelid  
back to blues  
and blood  
pumping one heartbeat  
at a time  
all the while  
the misunderstood  
concept  
of clocks  
challenging us all  
to do something ...  
fists pounding  
chest  
like gorilla  
raising conch shell  
blowing jazz  
exploding roses  
dreams

in extreme rewind  
the sun  
rising  
and setting  
a thousand times.

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# KJ Hannah Greenberg

## His Renewed Acquaintance

His renewed acquaintance,  
That winsome buddy boy,  
Important enough to expedite  
Meat or cheese across deli lines,  
Coughed, stumbled, and then fell dead.

Otherwise happy in his middle class home,  
Such a fellow revealed, at time of autopsy,  
Some of his creative furries notwithstanding,  
Patterns of investments in angel networks  
(Certain URLs were inked on his skin).

His widow declared it's better to teach raw ceramics,  
Hike for empties, rescue tourists, photograph Mt. Everest,  
Jumble fiduciary directives, streak at awards ceremonies,  
Research skinks, hide homework, pursue dunderdoodles,  
Than keel over when eating pastrami on rye, with pickles.

No purple towel magic or blue lagoon wishes save  
From lethal ineptitude, unspecified hopelessness;  
Consider, mostly aggressive business practices,  
Parachute souls away, bring heart break, seizures,  
Angina spelled out via letters of tax loopholes.

Accordingly, various ways of crumbling crackers,  
Mushrooming middles plus Zen retreats aside,  
Call up mange rivers to join commonplace lives  
Until peace makers' pace makers tick remorse,  
Bind material goods against breathing's relative worth.

## Employing Muster when Sending Extra Emails

Shoving him in the head caused a complete absence of redeeming qualities  
Ordinarily common to main-belt asteroid minors encapsulating their experiences.  
Consequently, he lost completely, any regard: for cancer survivors who die, suddenly,  
From complications of pneumonia, for altruistic bouquets, and for fallen blossoms.

Elsewhere, a mom who sacrificed political accomplishments to devote herself to children,  
Witnessed their visceral-intense mutilation under the wheels of an utterly drunk driver.  
Kismet spins not only the goings on of space station occupants, but also of labor leaders.  
(Domestic drudgery remains no guaranteed retreat from reelection promises or pain).

Clerks muster courage when sending extra emails about professional interfaces;  
Ancient environs, their days and nights reputed to be intensely precious, elicit,  
Over millennia, patterns of social responses deemed unreasonable elsewhere.  
Internal exploration, only sometimes, is easier to understand than metamorphosis.

Know that olive oil's still scarce, teacher-parent conference can't be rescheduled,  
Little portions of goodness, fortuitous results, ill-perceived notions of nature,  
Spin against long spans of general happiness, also, "attitude" mentioned twice,  
Old-fashioned tendencies try to improve character traits able to instill deeds of kindness.

Seemingly inconsequentially large numbers of people embrace wee cases of extortion.  
The populous attributes no little importance to the support teams that hold them up.  
Alternatively, mobs soldier against steel structures, wooden tracks, cheap plastic, glass,  
Fashion weddings, affairs, educations, compete against moon bases for quality adventure.

Rhetorically-manufactured world news, insidiously persists in tinting our experiences,  
On condition of receiving gifts like high tower residencies, operation center visits,  
Our kowtowing to superiors, catching squirrels for breakfast, sniffing them, eating them.  
Alternatively, it's ignorant sorts who cause the blocks by which we proletariats stumble.

## **Crocus Friends**

Crocus friends bloom suddenly,  
Usually becoming vibrant after storms,  
But wither when too much sun reminds  
Us on good weather championing winter.

# John Grey

## COME SEE WHAT YOU HAVE IN ME

Plunger versus plugged drains,  
sneakers steeped in dirty water,  
snuffing out a problem  
so demanding,  
I'm in the bathroom,  
sweating, cussing,  
almost devouring my  
blistered hands,  
so I can get back  
to a time  
when the toilet flushed -

I finally reach a point  
inured to pain,  
staring down failure,  
head so raging, so explosive,  
it threatens its surrounds -

Many little things  
you may have missed,  
so obvious,  
so pure in their intent,  
but random,  
changing a bulb,  
cutting grass,  
unblocking that world  
of unseen pipes -

come,  
take the stairs,  
peer through the doorway,  
cast your eyes  
toward one single man -  
he operates in full.

## **LEFT BEHIND**

What have I left behind  
that others use for memory?  
The clip of hair  
pasted in an album?  
The borrowed Madonna 45,  
now played for both of us?

What about that see-through negligee,  
gifted without guilt?  
Or the baseball?  
Or the banner on the wall?

I'm a comb in San Francisco,  
A napkin sketch in Aspen.  
A program from an art event  
somewhere in Sioux Falls.

I shed like skin, like leaves.  
I'm anything dead  
that living has a use for.

## **THURSDAY'S CHILD**

She died in Boston on a stormy night.  
She could have moved to Florida.  
Or to Arizona knowing it was dry as her sense of humor.  
But she chose Beantown.

And it was on a Thursday - as expected -  
she always saved her living for the weekend -  
her death could pick around in what was left.

It happened around three a.m.  
The nurse was half-asleep at her desk.  
Family, friends, were all in their beds.

But there was enough of Boston to see her off.  
And the weather, though tapering,  
still dotted the hospital window.  
And Thursday was there -  
returning to the crime scene.

# Daniel Y. Harris

## Tetragrammaton

for Andrei Codrescu

*In that day, my LORD will strip off the finery of the anklets, the fillets, and the crescents; of the eardrops, the bracelets, and the veils; the turbans, the armlets, and the sashes; of the talismans and the amulets; the signets rings and the nose rings; of the festive robes, the mantle, and the shawls; the purses, the lace gowns, and the linen vests; and the kerchiefs and the capes.*

*Isaiah 3:18-23*

*JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*

The irreal body of nubility, skinned to bare bone, charting the exposed trope with a welt of air and threadbare resolve. A mantle or a sack to hold the latest rapture with lapis dagger and brittle papyrus? Not the holy semaphore of a recast coda—the continuum of common oath with its disgruntled exegetes. That day, masked with cacti and terebinths, came to be inscribed on skin and stripped veil. They were addressed and finally betrayed. They say, unstudied—less than unstudied—*signum* and false cadence of fear and devotion. Nevertheless, the wordplay of Writ and burnt light explained the balk of passive seers, overriding the prophetic yelps of the Lord. How many Lords? One vacuity, fretful, dispatched, impacted by the gleans

of a messianic age, but still one, spooled in chalk dust while a passerby says I must become like Isaiah or die. Underfoot, the rough threshold and scabby smatterings of regret. Damn the simple and swayed. Damn the topsy-turvy, come-and-go words that rhyme with bleed. Damn the scapegoat with acid reflux: post-exilic—that the restored links divest from doubt and leave piles of idols blessed for Shabbat. Are the sycophants waving? No, they're tossing pomegranates,

cheeks stretched with sand. When did this become the House of the Dead? When the tongues were circumcised and the Lord strutted. Imps of the perverse sway. Not imps. Not perverse. The ravaged and saved, lamb-stirred with a single, stiff and final plea to saunter on the new exodus drenched in the afterbirth of covenant. Why regret? Why underfoot? Why damning?

To fume and spew the yellow-green bile of holiness, receding up on the day the Dead Sea became my palm. I, the Tetragrammaton, coiffed and privileged behemoth, ineffectually referred to as the Lord (Elohim, El Shaddai, Adonai), am neither prelapsarian nor ontological. Call me “Impedimenta,” and “Gleam of Thong.” I smote the divided consequences of prayer. I am eye-malice of I. I am decibel of the stoked flame of I. I am Azimuth of the hellbent dwindle of I. I am the blank of I and double apostrophe of I with the gawky, cobalt sheen of judgment. You, Isaiah, are my pallid secretion tinkering with rusty red tweezers. Tinkering? Picking, as if to unscab the daemon caked with the *parzuf* of a wrinkled face. I hazard the fabled denizens and summon the dark arts of trope. This is my

epitome-grid with its futility-port. I pulse and fidget, squirm and preen, groom and thrust, knead and sever the veins of your pineal eye. My shape? Pear-bellied. Your shape? Firelit stick-figure with Chaplinesque gate. Why? Must you pepper the wink? And the fathom of irk, will it bust a gut courting lusty demoiselles? Not under my unblinking watch primed for tractates. The kingdom’s zone—wink, wink—says obey the redacted law. I am hungry and beleaguered. Stop the grimace of dogma and shelf the limited edition. Words are lozenges. I can’t compete with this proximity and choose levity, the scant ellipses unsigning your name. Infiltrate the schemer who redacts to convert the latest submissive. It is You the Obdurate One. You have spoken of greed, self-pity, cunning and the much-

vaunted fists of fury. Look at Your red, torsoed seraphs of apocalypse with their thorny brimstone and flame-claws. You are envoy of destruction filched from Edom—the sick cognate who hunts after us. I am an errant knave and never doubt the oracles of many, exposed as the neck-faced revolt of the rabblement. This is Your militant display with ass of the master’s crib. You are the Lord of festering sores. I *daven* before the sacred arc. Dare I speak of Your shape? Your length as lit parasangs? Dare I speak of Your limbs,

sapphire eyes and crystalline brow? Dare I call You adamic, golemic and anthropoidal? Will I be skinned for the hype, one more victim of smote before the obese exile? I oppose the opposition of opposing Your opposition and blame all the insufferable mutants who speak this mock-slippage

of You. I believe in You, You the sneer-lipped gimp with sulfuric spit. My prayers are the bric-a-brac of a blue incubus and a white succubus self-exacting the parting and captivity of my ruined self. I am misplaced, mistimed, misread, misprisoned, mislabeled, misguided, misnamed and missive. You are *intéressé* and absolute. No abatement with *faux* verdigris for this triumph of the Lord. Listen, I'll reduce Your ruined force to a simple thing: I am Your vassal, Your amplifier. No one rests. Clad in miniature fedoras with tiny slits for antenna, a rabbinic cabinet of Ungeziefer has decided to remove *The Book of Isaiah* from its *JPS Hebrew-Ungeziefer Tanakh*. I am disgusted, said Professor Isaiah Blaberus of The University of Giganteus. *The Book of Isaiah* symbolizes a fluidic container for the Blattodean people. We Blattodeans are not known

for censorship. This is canonic suicide. Hello, my name is Isaiah, said Isaiah to a room filled with 1,000 people named Isaiah. Welcome to Isaiah's Anonymous, a safe place to purge yourself of the name of Isaiah, reclaim identity and repeal your grotesque genetic inheritance. Please remain burrowing and repeat after me, Isaiah said with baritonic panache. I am not Isaiah. I don't condemn the human race. Swarm behavior and circadian rhythm, robotic legs, membranous hind wings: these are our stigmata, morphed from rote Derridean circumfession. King Neoptera not Cyrus the Great with his rogue pineal eye. Dash as hyphen augments the desperate sense of lost hatchlings. The empty eggcase of revision now renames the Babylonian captivity to fit this metamorphosis, the Blattodean captivity from the lost books of the *Roachemberg Chronicle*, as penned by Rabbi Scholem ben Blaberus, ancestor of acclaimed

genetilinguist, Professor Seymour Blaberus. My name is Isaiah. My cells divide each time I molt. I feed on radiation, burden of the Adam Kadmon, the primordial Adam, shaped as the universe, endowed with massive organs, head, torso, limbs, hands, and arms that reach from one expanding periphery of cosmologic contour to all others. Adam Kadmon is Macranthropos in Plutarch and Parusha in the Indic *Upanishad*. He is a variant of a puerile black and red mythopoetic cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis. He is the theomorphic imp of the Garden of Eden as well as black hole where the place of seats, the throne, is 118 myriads. His height

is 236 myriad plus 1,000 leagues. From His right arm to His left arm there are 77 myriads. From the right eyeball to the left eyeball there are 30 myriads. His cranium is 23 myriads. His head is 60 myriads, corresponding to the 613 myriads of the heads of Israel.

Ganglia smelted to bloody veins spool the red mesh of torso with Hebrew letters of a limbic G-d body. The after-bliss of exposed vertebrae washes itself of birth and leaves a smear of being exposed to the violence of ruined creation through gnosis and pleroma. Ur-myths spawn like amoeba in their vital broth. A head delivers a broken smile, rigged, the kabbalists say, to unnerve emotion. Was Isaac the Blind, the prophet's namesake and dramaturge of broken vessels, an Adam Kadmon? His precursory text, *The Book of Creation*, appears preternatural, as if its theosophy of transmigration were the nostrils of a stirred golem. Neither the Adam Kadmon nor *The Book of Creation* settles the persistent entropy of which the human as miniature Kadmon or Isaiah or cosmologic Magus never defies. Demon of the bitter G-dman of Isaiah1:4-6, replete with epistolary blue-black festering

sores and cracked cranium. Demon or the eschaton's spun void as interpretive disease with the event of a soul-jacked theosophy of dread? More theomorph than demon or eschaton as shaft is the singed and ashen complaint of the dissed. Nothing rises but the obese bronze of Judean sand with its burnt bone-air and the stirred rage of *gevurah*. He's well-disposed, shy of respite, gifted in cunning, posing with dilated pupils over the funeral-orgy of divinity. This is the promising voluptuals of the theomorph with neck curls. He's unfingermarked and antonymic. He hears the cries of dissenters. Unmoved, by heterogeneity, nothing roughs the periphery like the tragic biblical pelts of the rank hunting to restore the broken. He hears choric tongues tick-dry as fossils worn like a prayer shawl to betray the boils of beam-light staging its metanarrative. Nothing decrescendos from the sulfuric

heights. Nothing surrenders to the *mitzvot* of compliance. Nothing lubricates the erectile tissue of the threatened Jew. What key-cluster moves up the tier to be against him? Isn't this the only authentic question? The pulpy heart jerks. It's an eyelid circus with donkeys versed in Esperanto. He means Hebrew and colloquial Aramaic. The cindered dogs. The scrawny vultures. The sick and savage desert wolves. Marduk on a cylinder seal with dragon and winged bull-calf distract him from the torsoed work of a prophet. Why torsoed? Is nothing mere remission of sense and induction? Why such oblique matrices of core logic? Is the only choice,

a *midrashic* hyperactivity wrestling with thousands of prior *midrashim*? We dissent now, hyper-reading a tepid resolve to bind ourselves to the Maggid of Mezritch and to the Alter

Rebbe. We pulp rapture and sustain ourselves in the natural hysteria of a new era of the *Mosiach*. Full circle, at least for now: theomorph is eschaton is demon is *Mosiach* is G-dman. He waits with the zealots to purify his blackened beast-soul, invoking the laws of self-incineration. The burning begins. First degree: the epidermis, erythema. Second degree: the superficial papillary dermis, red with clear blisters, blanches. Third degree: full thickness of entire dermis, stiff white-brown. Fourth degree: extends through skin and subcutaneous tissue, black charred with eschar. Once a G-dman (purposely snipped to demure from nuance), now an eschar: the eschar, or the prophet, Isaiah Eschar. At this juncture, we may permit ourselves a brute suspension and tip our hats to dead tissue, gangrene, ulcers, fungal infections, necrotizing spider bites, cutaneous anthrax,

acids, alkalis, carbon dioxide, metallic salts, sanguinarines, imiquimods and black salves containing zinc chloride, herbal and bloodroot extracts. He is emptied full. This is the new age of Escharotomy. Judgment (*gevurah*) and mercy (*hesed*) go by way of the pterodactyl and double dactyls: extinction and platitude. Nothing has prepared Isaiah Eschar for infidelity. Our umbrage is a disgrace. Should we tally our post-prophetic figure, returned uber to vault over the new plebeians? Inertia surfaces gutted of its transcendental charm. Abandon claims itself as *vitae*. Dispassion returns to occupy midheaven. Indifference sports a set of finely coiffed *payis*. Neglect becomes the psychopathology of a *tzaddik*. Self-mutilation reasserts itself as the base of *tzedakah*. Overhead, the wingbeats of jackdaws conjure sewers and spires linked by the oily white

noise of seismic jerking. In the incendiary smoke, Isaiah Eschar lounges on an oversized pincushion eating raw venison escalope. It's far from over: words throb with acetylene, implode and fragment like shards in crystal vessels, corrupting *geist* to uncheaper the gleam. Strophe and pericope of hard service: exergue as Jerusalem/Zion in double entendre and tricola—divine jolt to the raw commission of a heavenly council: from the agon of Moses comes again our crude G-dman with the indefinite digress of colons and the viral mdash: “speak,” “go up” and “fear not” a dense *Targum* and *Septuagint* of the flesh: Isaiah will build the third temple, love-lavished, hazing his wife who is sucked through the tedium of a two-foot

colon, followed by four bicola and ending with a balanced tricolon. The prosody and exegesis is enough to kill a mule.

Make clear his seared eyeballs with their Mount Moriah lashes and Masoretic pupils—for him the moldy figs demand the Qumranic tone: bane of *shema*. How charming my erotica, erect in an abstruse prophecy of doom. I have, for our viewing pleasure, computer parts, doll parts, circuits, wires and metal lampshade cover with thermoses, sporting a fine array of coins, batteries and colored duct tape. This, instead of festive robes. Tumescant like an obelisk, I smoke a roll-your-own orb, clad in gloves and micro thong. Smelted to bloody veins, I spool the red mesh of my torso with Hebrew letters. The after-bliss of exposed vertebrae washes itself and leaves a smear of prequels to spawn like poids in the viral broth of my rigged ploy. Not the buried talisman. My tattoo is calcified like a medieval corpse with a styptic soul—holy ennui in glyphs of a *nihil obstat* pricks

the dermis—the azo dye of my covenant, undespoiled. My demon-goat has been hurled, sins purged and reformed as skinned piety. I tilt a crooked wink over green cacti in cadmium light. Cobalt blue fumes with speckled white, flank my spiked tail and cloven hooves. An influx of acrylic specks colors my mania of scape. My indecent apparel—red ganglia, red organs, red viscera and black cowboy boots—once a contender and Yahwic rival, my glued body, built from splits in shards of oily light, outshines the law with ear wax. I complain of stasis, sporting a torso of 6.75 ounce plastic lemon juice containers. My ruinous sagesse on cardboard—a street anger of dirty horns with lumpen spittle. At night they sport kerchiefs and black, vampiric capes. My ecclesia of tonic sevens microprocessed as a colony of skullcaps dancing above geometric webs of black, stringy notes.

It's the counterpoint of body lice and ticks—ocelli with a 512 L2 cache in serial notes of a malware swarm, me, as maestro, conduct with rash. The rabbis have seen me in sensitized gelatin plates with their black wolf light, girdled through miniature derricks—web-strained spokes of flaked ice below mangled branches, erupt and still the failed converge. The moral nebulae of *soi-même* with its vacuity prompt is to blame. Nonsense: the laws of rancor, entropy, the errant lapse of the sublime, that I balk in the thicket of my puerile need for viscera—my alibi-self rips me a new one—no leeway for rage's elect, staring a hole through my split skull. My skull is an idol. The idol is idle, cuts to the quick in proxy, scion of G-D by rote—my hand starved of symbol, smotes the slip—

wit for writ and shot to death. The law is chronic—lord of bypass,

points at the handle. Postlude, removed from my cap.  
Isaiah's daft like G-D's bravura to covet the near in thick sheets  
of rain pelting Judea. He plays shaman moved to kenosis in a *bitul*  
of extended arms. With each lift, it's an augur of the wind's  
fury, a silent scream of prayer. Flood syllables speak the fetish  
that strips the rib from the blood of Eden. *Baruch Hashem*—we  
are the organs of *mosiach* in covenant, reading *Isaiah* 3:18-23  
with our feet, liver, gall, and coccyx. We rise and recite the moral  
quickens—dancing as one in a crowd cloistered by belief.  
For in silhouettes we revert to syzygies, effect this unity  
in *midrash* to gloss our devotion in prayers of promise.  
On these days of awe our eyes are *besmert*. Supernal shapes  
melt to basic blend and widen zero to fuse union beyond unity:  
to cleave back if cleaving is a ridge of hooks in skin to beget

Isaiah's interminable quest for scrolls. To pick a mimicry  
of the *tetragrammaton*, death's forager, for the sake of Isaiah's  
flame: boils, hives, flakes of *shevirah* self-exacting six hundred  
and thirteen scars in words of betrayal. His next iteration: bearded  
ascetic with a schism of determinants, from the Galilee to Vilna,  
as sibyls of bliss lighting the shtetl—where *Hasid* against  
*Mitnagdim*, with their fedoras and fatal polemics of the messiah,  
caused an *aliyah* of words in equity of *kippah* and *tefillin*, to bring  
your *kadmonic* body near, before Cossacks burned log  
synagogues to ash. Then skilled *semicha* sacrificed a goat  
whose blood was half albumin and half *pilpul*. Yours was errant  
poverty, village-leaping to the wheels of Ezekiel. For *Torah*,  
the other riposte, unequalled gift of sense without rupture,  
is a Kabbalah with hands, holding letters among prophets,

shines now for us the gene pool of mixed marriages.  
In the *genizah* of his old synagogue Isaiah as Golem  
can leave the wooden beams and enter into the red-dark,  
wrinkle-eyed—a place built into his skeleton, named  
flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, brother of a mock-body  
double—mordant letters of hyllic being rough the edge  
where he writes. The Vltava running under gothic spires,  
he robed, thick-boned, Ashkenazic frame, conjurer  
and conjured, could not be but is, could stop at any moment,  
but breathes himself. It is snowing. The overlording space,  
cold cavern, below the *Alter Jüdischer Friedhof*—what is blood  
but the dark in him. Skin itself naked, calls out and mel  
Convulsed to lift himself from his wired intestines,  
undelivered and broken by birth, this rough and shiny

Isaiah named Paraphilia Cherub, waves to his refined double Jungfrau Cherub and says that he is prone to wear leather and prowl the Red Light Districts, eyes of spur, hardened under pressure of touch. He lives for the vincilagnia and the fetish of thumbcuffs, belly chains, monogloves and sleepsacks. He drip beads of fungus near the relief. He licks his lips and says that he wraps himself in black lace, dons a thong with a zipper and arouses himself in the pure liberation of bondage. His dear cousin, he sneers, is so elegant and painterly with his Michelangelo hand and letter *Mem*. He is, of course, his erotic precursor, minus the phallus which grew, unstirred, to gargantuan proportion. Can those little legs support so massive an organ? He fears that it was his exploits which enabled his selection to G-D's

kabbalistic pantheon. How dignified he stands with "Origin," "History" and "Commentary," as his accompanying *midrash*. Paraphilia Cherub is the jerk-shake of the Tetragrammaton, what survives behind finesse, waiting for phosphorescence, leaving him giddy, hungry for the rancor of Jungfrau Cherub's first climax, jet-streamed in sticky palms. Proto-Isaiah's prophylaxis slipped over Ahaz's stiff body—it's the burden of charm: to charm, to be charmed and wear a charm with a postexilic curve of the springy wrist. Deutero-Isaiah died in this charm—a hole within a hole at the end of a conduit leading to a line of Cyrus Cylinders. Judean footstool servant, Trito-Isaiah, died thrice in this auto-affected mise-en-scène, a pimp to First Temple Botox foreseen in the venal roils of a *Louis Vuitton* oracle. Savage elegance

receded to the size of pruning hooks. Blade-words sliced a thin flap of gray-brown skin below the jowl of a new man—his hair scented with crushed olives on an attic red-figure amphora where war scrolls soaked up corked wine with creed equity and the sick acedia of poisoned light. Def integuments outside the ribcage—seepage death: his body's incunabula starving in queues, self-stymied, plummets into irresolute resolve—the punctured heart, codified. Unknot him in rumored throat-words, dissolved and reified, hearing to stay human and afflicted with order: entropic stones of no throne behind Isaiah's veined eyelids and flared lips. The world to come is ill-tempered, locked and loaded on the larded target of dead prophet anti-art and the banished future of critics—their ministry of black mood canonizing his last glare with red-stained linen

strips on palimpsest. His future in a beaker of formaldehyde, hints at a red mummification with experimental amygdalae to soil redemption. There are always two in the fiery pigment of the high void—the granular stigma of a faux prophet, sublimed into bad conduct and the evanescent terminus coerced into infinity, itself equally sublimed into bad conduct. Their agon flays the brain, stirred by minutiae, lusting after zero in alchemical scum to release a swarm of waxy-black beetles over a field of rotting corpses and skinny demiurges with gold skin and feline eyes. Isaiah is faux prophet. The evanescent terminus, G-D. Between them, the multitudes drone on in an inward turning arc of regret and the visceral dread of living on in the pricked nub, numb to the jolts of pleased pain.

## **Kevin D. LeMaster**

### **Bus Stop**

The tree still stands  
where the bus used  
to stop and collect our  
rigid bodies, in winter.

Like butterflies under  
a microscope, we stood  
trying to warm to a bit  
of sun that shone a naked eye  
through its gnarled branches.

Five, ten below,  
we were out there,  
huddling close to a  
wrinkled trunk,  
waiting for that yellow shelter,  
that massive rolling Twinkie,  
just in time to deposit us  
in front of another school  
to freeze again.

## **Creek Stone Envy**

they tingle every digit  
of my work worn feet  
as I have become a giant  
tank ornament  
for tadpoles

the creek is awash  
with every consistency  
of stone  
the sand  
like dough made for bread  
squeezes through every toe  
and is immediately washed  
away

a dear friend once said  
one must find balance  
in order for us not to be  
dashed against the rocks

I say  
I've already been cut  
and am now the prey  
being devoured at will

## **Standing atop the George Washington**

Its stack blew thick rings,  
like clouds from a pipe,  
and with a complementary toot,  
I was drawn into a world  
full of the clackety-clack  
of rolling metal on metal.

It ran the last time;  
steam engines were no longer  
and this one was headed home  
to be dismantled and melted;  
like coinage that no longer  
belongs at the mint,  
or anywhere else.

I stood on her deck  
until my pried fingers bled,  
holding onto a child  
I no longer knew,  
but understood.

# Walter Ruhlmann

## Arborescence

It is as if I had cut the branch on which I am sitting  
the tree lured  
and lusted me  
like she who sings she's ready to be hit  
I can say I am ready to fall  
down and shatter to pieces,  
tiny smashed debris of flesh,  
and bones,  
veins and arteries,  
cells,  
genes,  
coming from the ancestry I piled up,  
compiled,  
stacked on pages,  
sheets of paper,  
digital documents,  
shared and stolen.

The blood running like rivers  
from the infertile steppes to the Norman shores,  
where will its course, its curse eventually end?

Family is my fake fate,  
the only masked way to fight against  
the oblivion and the dead end I built myself,  
against all odds.

## **My German Shepherd**

I dreamt of her last night  
and the song came back to my mind.  
He was lying next to me  
snoring  
while the cats purred at my feet.

My brutal German shepherd  
never growls again,  
it makes me fret. His fire  
heats the room again,  
and its fur is so gorgeous  
the cats are envious.

Then they fuss  
over the fringes of its groin  
and they claw  
my German shepherd's eyes.

Its golden necklace bears its name  
but it seems I forgot  
what it was.

This loss of memory  
prevents me from going further,  
the night went on though  
and I kept thinking about her.

These thoughts will be lost in the shades  
covering the window panes,  
invading the sour bed sheets,  
more hair to brush away.

## Two Sights of You

Inspiration is like the rain that floods our landscape and the feelings that come out of it are as overwhelming and submerging.

In the classroom, in the toilets, on the road to work or on a photograph taken last time I met the octopus and the chipmunk.

I.

A sight of you took me by surprise this morning.  
The evening train had just left here  
and while I spread butter on toast  
(or what remained of it rather),  
I glimpsed an old seedbed in a garden along the road.  
It made me think of the ones you built in your own garden  
where the fairies and the fat ants were having lunch once  
under the cherry tree.

Not even stunned, conspiracies and treacheries are fat bitches  
who never linger anywhere too long.  
They meander and they curl inside our most unexpected visions.

You will never fall into oblivion.

II.

She was amused, I held her girl:  
the daughter she and the chipmunk composed on those remote shores where we met,  
far away from this land, from these unfortunate mountains.  
On this island where we spent too much time together.

She sent it along and I watched it.  
It was awkward and amazing,  
it was unreal and misleading,  
my ears, my eyes – hidden by those uncanny spectacles –  
the shiny ball that serves me as a head,  
my skin, my mouth, the way I look at the objective of the camera,  
hiding the most terrible dread, the gruesome eyes and limbs and tentacles  
of the monster  
the octopus.  
That leech, that slug, that snail, that invertebrate cow.

Well, on this picture taken by surprise,  
on this photograph where a baby girl laughed and giggled and spurted all her might,

I recognized your face: your ears, your eyes, your head,  
minus the strings of hair you kept on top of it,  
your skin, your mouth, the way you looked at me,  
and anyone really, any one who scared you or you misunderstood.

## Craving for More

My body is now used to starving –  
noons and evenings;  
stars never come back to feed me,  
neither do bread, milk or honey;  
unless some blue skies shelter me  
and wrap warmly around my starved body.

Those limbs soften, those bones get thin,  
that heart pumps dusty blood, those lungs  
engulf the stale air, rushing inside,  
diving into that darkest part of mine.  
The tar, the ashes, the monoxide,  
all those poisons I have inhaled for a long time.

Other poisons took you from me,  
they prevented further exchange, more relation,  
they finally erased the slight remains of elation  
I had kept in a safe for so long.  
They gnawed your life, bit your organs,  
they finally refrained you from ever breathing again.

This starvation is unhealthy, it is an unbearable suffering.  
It drives me mad, it makes me sad, it leaves me bare,  
even awkward words and concepts collide, shatter  
against the emptiness left by the loss, the cut-glass hole,  
I bear inside my chest ruining my entrails,  
my stomach shelters knife-winged butterflies.

# Paul Beckman

## WATERMELONS & CITRUS

I didn't get a gift box of grapefruit and oranges from Florida in January like the rest of the family did, so I didn't expect my Aunt Goldie's June watermelon call. "Expect the unexpected," my great Uncle Hymie once told me.

I was eleven and hadn't seen him in almost a year. He was as big as my grandfather, his brother, tall with a huge belly spilling over his belt like sour cream on a latke. And, like his three brothers, Uncle Hymie had a massive head that seemed as if it were plopped onto his shoulders. I ran up to him, arms wide open to give him a hug. He sidestepped me at the last moment and stuck his foot out, tripping me. I ended up bawling after skinning my knee and bumping my head on the concrete. He picked me up, laughing and saying "shhah" and with each "shhah" a blast of Hymie whiskey breath came at me. Uncle Hymie held me and hugged and kissed me. If I had expected the unexpected I would have been prepared for his next move--dropping me onto a pile of dog doo on the lawn, but I was new at this and he wasn't. He laughed so hard he had to sit down on the curb to keep from falling. Whenever he visited after that, I spent the time alternately avoiding him and torturing him. After all, he had to learn to expect the unexpected also.

I never told him or anyone that it was me who put the garden snake under his car seat, not even when he called from a gas station on the Merritt Parkway asking to be picked up because he crashed his car when a snake crawled up his leg. My grandfather and two uncles picked him up, but instead of bringing him home they brought him to a place to "dry out."

"Snakes. Of course he sees snakes with all the schnapps he drinks. I'm surprised he doesn't see the Czar," my grandfather grumbled. Then he took out a bottle of Four Roses and poured shots for anyone around who wanted one, and that included twelve year old me.

When Uncle Hymie finished drying out he stayed at my grandparents for a while and I remember playing outside and capturing another garden snake. I stood on the cellar hatchway door looking in the window until I caught his eye. Then I waved the snake back and forth. He stared at the snake and broke out into large beads of sweat. I saw my uncle nudge my aunt and nod at Hymie's leaking face. He looked at me. It wasn't a nice look. I tossed the snake in the bushes and went back into the house. In the kitchen I took a paper bag and blew air into it and twisted the top. I then went into the dining room and took my place at the table. No one said anything about the paper bag.

Uncle Hymie stopped wiping his face dry and grabbed the serving spoon from the brisket. He beat the bag. He really whacked it. He was ferocious with his thunderous poundings. "Snakes," he mumbled with each hit. Gravy splattered everywhere, hitting faces or clothes or both. Finally, my grandfather opened what remained of the bag and showed Hymie that it was empty. Hymie collapsed in his chair waiting for the rest of the family to thank him for saving them. Instead, he was led to the couch, his head and face

swathed in cold compresses, but he only began to calm down when my grandfather brought him a shot of schnapps. "Expect the unexpected," I said to him on my way out the door. He looked at me not knowing what the hell I was talking about.

"Want a watermelon, fresh from Florida?" My Aunt Goldie asked me when I answered the phone.

"When did you get into town?" I asked.

"Just got in. Meet me at Jimmys in Savin Rock for lunch and you can get your melon."

"Listen," I told her, "If you'd like to get settled first I can bring some lunch over to your house and pick up the melon."

"Some other time," she said. "I've got a load of these melons to deliver."

I tried every way to get invited to her house but nothing worked. In front of other family members she complained that I never visited her, but on weekends when she invited the family for a cookout, I was excluded. She never told me why, but I knew. She was afraid that I'd bring Flo. She hadn't spoken to her sister Flo in four years; except for the time she forced her way into Flo's apartment and threatened her. Flo was in her early eighties at the time and Goldie was a mere kid of seventy-five. It wouldn't have been a fair fight.

Flo answered the knock on her door and was totally surprised to see Goldie standing in her hallway.

"Goldie, come in. I was just about to have lunch, join me."

Goldie shoved Flo out of the path from the door to the apartment, walked over to the breakfront and took out two brass candlestick holders. Holding them like barbells, she said, "Don't try to stop me or I'll brain you with these."

Still leaning against the wall where she was shoved, Flo said, "All you had to do was ask me for them, you didn't have to resort to this."

"Those are my candlesticks and you've kept them for eight years. Enough is enough."

"These were Lillys and I took them when she died. Why didn't you say something before?"

"Because I was hoping you'd come to your senses and not make me make a scene." Goldie walked out, but not before pushing Flo with her shoulder further into the wall. "This is your fault," Goldie said. "You always try to get your own way."

Whatever resentment she harbored against me during the January citrus season had apparently passed and I would never know what it was. That's probably not true. She would most likely let it out during some unrelated moment of anger aimed at someone else but using my transgression as a means to prove her point. The Rosinoff Convention, (which my family goes by, but doesn't know it) stipulates that

at least three years have to go by before something can be used in this way. Waiting over ten years is required to use the Rosinoff “Year One” Trump. It was a mutant family gene that allowed these sisters to remember an injustice from the ‘Year One’ and insert it into an argument as proof of their point. Every adult in the family had earned her “year one” black belt.

Aunt Goldie was waiting for me in the parking lot of Jimmys with a back seat filled with large melons. She looked great. Her hair, a natural silver as it had been for as long as I could remember, shone in the sunlight. She had my grandmother’s pink cheeks and smooth complexion; and she had a quick and frequent smile, unlike any of her siblings. “Which one is mine?” I asked after kissing her hello. The kiss was accepted but not returned.

“Always with the questions. What difference does it make? They’re all perfect. Straight from a Florida farm and picked only three days ago. I made good time driving up. No, anyone but that one,” she said as I struggled to lift one out of the back seat of her coupe.

“I thought they were all the same,” I said.

“They are,” she said, “But not that one.”

This conversation would have taken place no matter which one I picked first.

“How about this one?” I asked.

“You have to ask? They’re all the same--take any one.”

“Okay,” I said lifting the original melon after touching and pushing each one a bit.

“Good choice,” she said. “He’s called Minsk and happens to be my personal favorite.”

My Aunt Goldie named everything. Her car was called Rollin, her toaster oven Bernie, and when she shopped she’d stand in front of the squash or whatever fruit or vegetable she was about to select and call out a name. “Schlomo? Where are you Schlomo? I’m here to take you home.” And then she’d rifle through the squash bin until she found “Schlomo” and scold him for hiding. “Just for that,” I heard her say once to a zucchini, “I’m going to take you home and cut you up into little pieces and throw you into a pan of hot oil.”

It’s a good thing that Goldie never had children. She knew the name of every item she owned, including her clothes, but she couldn’t remember any of her great nieces or nephews’ names. Every boy was “Julius” and the girls were all “Ethel”. Her feet were firmly planted in the air.

Once inside Jimmys we were lucky enough to get a window seat looking over Long Island Sound. “What a great view,” I said.

“How can you eat that traif?” she asked as I forked another fried clam belly into my mouth. “It’s traif that causes hemorrhoids,” she stated. I watched her dip her fried shrimp into the cocktail sauce and tried my best not to think about her toches.

“They’ve gotten chintzy with their cocktail sauce,” she said. This was a conversation we had every year-- that is every year that I was watermelon good.

“What year,” I asked her, “do you suppose the Jimmy family sat around and said, “Let’s up our profit margins. Any ideas?” And one of the up and coming little Jimmys says, “Yeah, we give too much cocktail sauce, cut it way down. Make ‘em ask for more.””

“Okay,” Jimmy said, “from now on we go chintzy on the cocktail sauce. Anything else?”

“Very funny, Aunt Goldie said, “But if you think making fun of me is the key to my heart you’re much mistaken.”

“I’m not making fun,” I said, “I’m teasing.”

“Call it what you will,” she said, “but I don’t find it amusing?”

“Sorry,” I said. “By the way, how come shrimp isn’t traif anymore?”

Shaking her head in disgust at my ignorance, she said, “Because everyone eats it, that’s why.” And I knew there’d be no box of citrus coming my way in January.

# Post Scriptum

## Roger Williams

### HrEE LAHNG STRAH

#### Lahng Strum in Dee

A soon brootha stack'd a lick  
goin broatha an' hit trimmer pleur-foos  
cam at 'er twiffy paether ploum hack it  
Níhkihtuh streuth wringl'd swaht ut  
lot's behint in brood pohster maer 't  
gaeve gaebe what's tuh beethum listering  
"Crot ahn's all!" ahn' prátbhthum sprooken tangy

"Hath yuh releever nor nánticut *or*  
cwad nor cut cahóots hiss tring?"  
Pleeboom on/córe bleems strang "Bah!"  
sayhin "Festa beléeber grund nots' golly-sully"  
Nighn neety flick hingst tuh latter dee dood  
ha placket min groin' attar kissed "Aye!" Toke a ring  
Blísst be bootha ahn' hits try dew through huh

Tsendt-offt:  
Dew crocky hin tuh pah  
Dew let's re:him  
Slang grohl tuh hint  
ahn' a flack latter grassco  
co-matters co-blatters

## Lahng Strum in High Fah

Wahn when heem boom matha mattas  
sátsit it bloothèd crih't 'em tor  
atta hork ahn' deemy so doh  
slítter'd took all tun side like it  
cloomb'd wryly re:opathéntèd  
clippt ahn' nis nor a how'm lacked shoom  
floo tippt aut twent goin'

"How cloo'd it?"  
Hábbersham Prókovahter by sample  
simples meehap "Hélluf! Hélluf!" ahn' hit "No!"  
No tween brootha ben tuh craen aut  
ganza gouda simmerung cleesum  
hout poor'd Prokubéethum flitting  
nun drast sat's een hup on Got hup  
shóokirèd all ahrouhn tuh cloan a-  
báhsahtasha hoot ben groot groan  
snit fed froo dents sheerskin gladder

Tsendt-offt:  
Less y'r sun maekers  
perstítit flowin'  
hwill at tan's spargle  
ah yáh ah yó  
rím bóthaatha  
s'lo ahn' lo

## **Hreetha Lahng Strum (Dee tuh Fah)**

Az tuh hiff heem pahm blatter  
tahk tuh ortha blootzin in  
lees leer glant 'er fah tur creet  
hownung im pahm lest lo stig  
cwall hiss ho oft blátherpeen

Lest tuh plast cloomthrip per plue  
per clue clathèp tis tat noohen  
clor-a-been (nreedy pitzul!)  
did hit groot nor bathréepus  
cloomd downuth glabber wit's nun  
stoppeth ménu-ménu "Oops!"

Tsendt offt:  
Nun perscrééthuh  
Tats stiller hreethuh  
(strumah-strumah)  
(strumah-strumah)

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Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.