

# Yggdrasil

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# Introduction

Zahira Rahman

## **A Story of Love**

A love locked in a dungeon was freed without rhyme or reason one night. Old, weak and clueless she stepped out into the vault of Heaven and saw the stars rain light. Grown used to the dark walls and oil lamps, she was blinded by starlight. Her skin glowed in the Milky Way and her hair knew no gravity. At once rendered blind and beautiful, she began singing her mad verses.

On the earth below, were creatures baling out poison from springs, streams, rivers and lakes. The sea was a slimy green and her verses, as it hit the waves, turned it white and foamy (and it has remained so ever since)

A few ancient looking young men and women shriveled and shrunk in the noxious air that enveloped the drooping boughs and veiling vines, looked up at the sky and caught the verses as it fell in drunken notes. They were delicate as if freshly strung of dropping dew, the whole of the lighted sky and dying earth were mirrored in them.

The sadness of love's many splendoured songs, schooled in the dark and deep, like witchcraft cast a spell on plundering tribes of men and women whose teeth were all made of gold- they had as long as they lived known only buying and selling.

For miles and miles afar smoke spewing towers stood triumphant and gleeful announcing man's industry and his foolhardiness.

Nothing else but climbing up had been taught in their schools, Looking around, Walking on wind-blown leaves, Wetting one's feet on rain –spattered steps, Observing, Waiting ,Watching were courses stripped off the academic schedule.

Against such formidable schemes of modernity, Love had no defences.

But, she was a teacher of pure descent, whose knowledge sprung from lonely journeys into the mind's unknown. The world of typed nonsense texts, repetitions and stringing together of words that many thought were gospel caught fire in the bleak honesty of her words: words that they fear to speak of in a world stripped of experience – where every pain was numbed, even as new afflictions were manufactured, failures looked down upon, even as none knew real victory and differences levelled, the experience of the beautiful as in a crooked smile was corrected through dental cosmetology and Shakespeare's sonnet no. 130 was promptly banned when a teenager began comprehending its lines.

Blind as love was, she knew neither the limits nor measures of giving.

She grew her garden on earth through light years and watched roses grow in her dreams. She dreamt, she did not see and her dreams were truer than any sighted being's knowledge. When gardens on earth were trimmed and fenced, her garden grew wild and free and had pests and birds and fruits, weeds and earthworms and caterpillars and grasshoppers, ladybirds, ants and beetles and spiders.

But one day her roses were damaged not by the storms or the sun but by dogs driven out of their homes. Love was told in the morning of her loss. She felt sorry for the dogs. Everyone, as was routine on earth, thought the dogs would be hounded and caught and shot for trespassing on private property because private property was the only thing that mattered and was guarded on earth. Ownership rights were respected more than right to knowledge or life. Moreover, violence was the only form of entertainment.

She was attacked with weapons sharper than swords - daggers of language sharpened in the kiln of propaganda. There was a lone fighter who defended her

side, Objectivity. He rescued her out of the mire of mass hysteria that cried out for the blood of the displaced dogs.

In the years that followed, Love and her companion Objectivity who heard her first on earth as she sang, set out to defend freedom and justice. They were at odds, but they made a great team. He wanted justice and reason she thought freedom and peace. Finally justice and freedom won for they had two sides.

The creatures on earth who had for many centuries been feigning life, who had never even in their folk tales heard of echoing bird songs, flitting and fading butterflies and glowing fishes were taught in many beautiful tongues to speak of them.

However, every word she uttered, every gesture of love was fatal, for love is like the act of dying-As she gave of herself, she was gifted with knowledge of eternity-drunk in this wisdom, she did not realize she was distancing herself from this mortal life and its tempting buyable joys.

Yet she gave, gave and she paused not to reflect. She did not think of the doomsday, lived the moment as it emerged as if out of a chrysalis and savoured it-sometimes full of joy, sometimes in cracking pain.

As Love dying knew, their children would one day inherit the Cosmos and every star would respect the other and that, the self would be realized in not-being.

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# Mark Cunningham

## Personality

I am afraid of picking up a disease or germs from a doorknob when Nanny's Uncle Albert, a human fly, comes for a visit.

Shirley's brother returns home from the Navy an alcoholic (people say insulting and revolting things about me).

When Colonel Flagg drives the doctors crazy so they perform an appendectomy on him, I worry about things I've said that might have hurt other people.

I will cross the street to avoid meeting someone after the convent inherits a prizefighter who hates to fight.

Margie earns some extra money by babysitting a monkey named Mr. Murphy (I frequently second guess personal decisions).

When Fred and his friends enter a singing contest, criticism or scolding leaves me unmoved.

I feel I'm about to go to pieces after Benny encounters a very strange-looking animal and brings it home, only to be reminded by T. C. that the gang has a firm policy against pets.

Mr. Ed analyzes a racehorse named Lady Linda because she can't win a race (a minister can cure diseases by praying and putting his hand on your head).

When Endora changes the features of Darrin's face to improve him, I crave excitement.

I have fits of laughing and crying that I cannot control when the camp psychiatrist helps Bilko reform his ways, or so everyone thinks

Danny gets in trouble for bringing Rusty's friends to the club (it is safer to trust nobody).

When Hogan fakes a radio broadcast to smuggle photos out of the camp, I don't crack under pressure.

After Felix leads the angry tenants on a rent strike after the new landlord refuses to keep up maintenance in the building, I consider myself to be more of an organized person

Lisa and Oliver unknowingly take Arnold the pig to the Harvard reunion (my troubles just seem to disappear when I'm around a large group of people).

When two partners have fun with their new secretary until she starts dating one of their clients, I give up doing things because I think too little of my ability.

My goals are open-ended and subject to change as new information becomes available after Harvey invents a pill that makes movie stars appear before your eyes.

Brenda dates a man who owns three McDonald's franchises (I believe there are better reasons for marriage than love).

When Doris and the writer she is visiting are kidnapped by gangsters, I find that common sense is not enough on its own.

I find it easy to make talk when I meet new people after a telephone cable washes up on the island and the castaways plan to tap into it so they can call for help.

Wilbur and Paul put on a horse suit that offends Mr. Ed (my family does not like the work I've chosen).

When Smart and 99 board a freighter in search of a thief and Smart is almost killed by the ship's falling mast, everything has a deeper meaning and I enjoy trying to figure it out.

I think it's a good thing to be frank when J. J. gets an ulcer after having an affair with a married woman.

Zsa Zsa Gabor redecorates the nursery when visiting Joey's house (I have a strong work ethic).

When the Catwoman uses her voice eraser to steal Chad and Jeremy's voices and hold them for ransom, I am easily defeated in an argument.

I frequently feel tired after Goober pays Gomer a visit.

Hogan helps three German scientists escape to America. (I believe people who compromise are weak).

When Alice tries to surprise Ralph after she wins the services of an interior decorator, I would like to try new innovations rather than stick to tested methods.

I am self-confident when Jim helps Bud overcome his shyness toward women.

Rhoda thinks she is a jinx (I have never been in love with anyone).

When Samantha loses her powers and so does Maurice when he kisses her, I am happy being as shy as I am.

I must sleep over a matter before I decide what to do after the boys have a fight, leading them to demand separate bedrooms.

Mr. Thackeray and Beanblossom try to join the Ancient and Exalted Order of Araby (I feel sure there is only one true religion).

When Donna tries to turn tomboy Trisha into a lady, I am on my guard with people who are more friendly than I expected.

I was frequently sent to the principle for cutting up when Pete tries to help a student who stutters.

Phyllis gets Ted to run for City Council (I read every editorial in the newspaper every day).

When Lucy plans to kidnap Ricky in order to get to spend more time with him, I get anxious and upset when I have to make short trips away from home.

I believe I am a condemned person after Lucy dreams she is in the village of her Scottish ancestors and is about to be fed to a dragon.

Lucy tried to cure Viv's cousin of his stage fright by hypnosis (I am an important person).

When the deadly bing bug threatens to destroy the entire corn crop of Hooterville, I believe my way of tackling problems is better than other people's.

I lose sleep over worry when Ray and Peggy are both called for jury duty on the case of a husband who is seeking alimony from his wife.

A beautiful decorator remodels the bathroom and then the Endicott's daughters (I go with the flow).

When Papa decides to campaign to speed up Glen and Katy's romantic involvement, I make to-do lists.

I have difficulty hiding negative feelings in order to keep the peace when Walter and Arthur are arrested for speeding while they are going fishing.

Jethro's new girlfriend is a burlesque dancer (I can't stand being alone).

When Quark is captured by Zorgon the Malevolent and is forced to reveal the location of "IT," I grind my teeth.

I know who is responsible for most of my troubles when Patty's banjo-playing Uncle Jed shows up for a visit, disrupting her plans for a formal dinner party.

Herman wins a family membership in a country club (I respond quickly and enjoy a fast pace).

When Cindy becomes a pest by tattling on the other kids, I never indulge in unusual sexual practices.

I enjoy being in control of a group when Bob tries to con his models into keeping house for him.

Oliver is asked to join the Hooterville fire department, but only if he can play a musical instrument (I feel strangers look at me critically).

When Ida fixes Rhoda up with a blind date, the only miracles I know of are simply tricks people play on one another.

I'm inclined to take things hard when Chachi's new wax destroys whatever it shines.

Rob follows a flying saucer to an upstairs office (even when I am with people I feel lonely most of the time).

When a neighborhood boy has been giving Joel black eyes, I often have to take orders from someone who does not know as much as I do.

I'm in between being too indecisive and too rigid when Fred and Barney become judges at the Water Buffalo's Beauty Contest.

Elly turns the Thanksgiving Day turkey into one of her pets (I prefer one-on-one conversations).

When O'Toole masters hypnosis and begins to put some of the crew under his power, I think it would be beneficial if we all shared the same ideas and opinions.

I get mad easily and don't get over it soon when Wilma tells Fred that he has nothing valuable that a burglar would want to steal.

Joanie dreams about love songs that would befit her friend (my hearing is apparently as good as that of most people).

When Herb plans to get even with Roger after Roger makes him pay half the bill at a restaurant even though Roger and Kaye ordered the more expensive dinners, I enjoy cooking for myself.

I seem to make friends more slowly than others when Lucy helps a frustrated artist sell his work by helping him die.

Woody is trying to date a pretty secretary, but her playboy boyfriend doesn't like it (I rarely get all the sympathy I should).

When Betty shocks her family when she says she doesn't want a birthday party or any presents, I feel the future is too uncertain for people to make serious plans.

I blame someone else when things go wrong after one of Martin's devices causes Tim to become a man everyone loves to hate.

Richie brings his date to Fonzie's apartment (a person should try to understand his dreams and be guided by them).

When a neighborhood boy has been giving Joel black eyes, I often have to take orders from someone who does not know as much as I do.

I wish I were a girl when Billie Jo gets a one-night stand as a singer at the Springdale Hotel.

Bobbie Jo wins a poetry contest and starts hanging out with some beatniks (I have had some very unusual religious experiences).

When Gomer writes secret love letters to Sgt. Carter to cheer him up, I would like to be a florist.

I am interested in theories when Dash Riprock thinks Miss Jane is Elly May, his new leading lady.

Exidor falls for a meter maid (I do not mix with people who are unpredictable and nonconformist).

When in Honolulu a con man tries to acquire a rare scarab of Jeannie's, but it's Jeannie who gets the last laugh, other people's ignorance appalls me.

I like to go to dances after Albie decides to fight a battle against the institution of marriage.

Fred and Barney, believing Fred's magic trick made Wilma and Betty disappear, go to a dance hall (I like to read about science).

When Rob applies for a job with a ventriloquist, I have attacks in which I cannot control my movements or speech but in which I know what is going on around me.

I like tall women when Fred accidentally hits himself on the head and assumes a new personality, that of a sophisticated gentleman.

Betty and Wilma take judo lessons when a prowler invades Bedrock (I believe I am being followed).

When Jethro enrolls in secretarial school, I think anyone who is able and willing to work has a good chance of succeeding.

I like to flirt when Lucy is a Police School rookie who goes on a stakeout for the Lover's Lane bandit.

A crazy kid shows up with a rock he says he found while on the moon (I am frequently paralyzed or have unusual pains in my muscles).

When Martin is mistaken for a store mannequin after he smells a cologne that causes him to become frozen, I believe that I make a creative contribution to society.

I think people are often jealous of my good ideas, just because they had not thought of them first, when Fred invents a new soft drink, which causes Barney to become invisible.

Howard robs the bank to prove that Goober is not a good deputy (I could do things that would be of great value to the world if given the chance).

When a horse follows Oliver home, but disappears every time he wants to show it to Lisa, I see things or animals or people around me that others do not see.

I have imaginary companions when Andy puts a wife-seeking ad in the newspaper and gets a good response, but all the applicants need dental work.

Fred intends to marry one of Lamont's old girlfriends (I have used alcohol excessively).

When Goober grows a beard and becomes a philosopher, I argue even when I know I am wrong.

I frequently tease animals when Opie finds that he likes to dance.

Grandpa learns that George is allergic to the checkerboard they are play on (I can make up excuses easily).

When an American athlete falls for an athlete from a socialist country, I feel love is more important than success.

I think children should be taught all the main facts about sex when Lucy becomes an over-protective secretary to a pregnant Petula Clark.

Kathy's surprise party turns into a brawl (I am apt to take disappointments so keenly I can't get them out of my mind).

When Rob attends a party in a strange town with a woman who adores him, I have the urge to do something harmful or shocking.

I think I am no good at all when a lonely boy is heartbroken to discover that his father, whom he thought was a Navy hero, is in reality the captain of a Staten Island ferry.

The castaways, all suffering from vitamin deficiency, are all after Gilligan's orange (I usually behave calmly and efficiently in an emergency).

When a bet for the Partridge family for \$25,000 to hide from a mystery writer leads to a wild chase around town, I am process-oriented and am especially interested in how the task will be accomplished.

Several times I have been the last to give up trying to do a thing when J. J. receives a commission to paint the portrait of a nude woman.

Toody and Muldoon have to decide between writing traffic tickets or going fishing on a yacht (I often worry about whether the windows and doors are unlocked).

When Jeff tries out for the PTA amateur show with his impersonations act, I feel unable to tell anyone all about myself.

I don't trust others with important tasks after Darrin becomes obsessed with his new powers and refuses to give them up.

Ernie is adopted by a bunch of gypsies (I believe we can learn from other cultures).

When Jenny chooses a ghetto gang as the subject of her thesis, I feel like picking a fight with someone.

I can remember having nightmares in the last five years when Lucy tries to replace a valuable vase she accidentally broke.

Lucy wrecks Harry's antique car while trying to give it a tune up (I would enjoy traveling 150 mph in a race care).

When Lucy wrecks Harry's house when she tries to repair a light switch, I like to visit places where I have never been before.

# Michael Lee Johnson

## *Missing of the Birds*

Keep my journal short.  
Just review January through March.  
Life is a dig deep snow on my sorrow.  
Bare bones of naked sparrows,  
beneath my balcony, lie lifeless.  
The few survivors huddle in bushes.  
Gone, gone is kitchen bowl that holds the seeds.  
Sparrows cannot get inside my refrigerator door  
nor shop late at Wal-Mart during winter hours—  
get away with it.  
I drink dated milk. I host rehearsals of childhood.  
Sip Mogen David Concord Wine with Diet 7Up.  
Down sweet molasses and pancake butter.  
I give in to condominium Polish demands.  
My neighbor's parties, loud blast language.  
I am weak in the Jesus feeding of the poor.  
I now merge day with night and sleep  
avoid my shame and guilt.  
I try clean, my thoughts of shell spotted snow.  
I see fragments, no more feeding of the birds.

### ***Heaven is My Horse Fly***

A common horse fly  
travels in my world,  
in my bathroom,  
it is summer time  
lands on my toilet seat  
dines at Nikki's  
kitty litter box refuels.  
Twenty three times  
round trip  
buzzes my skull skin my head  
he calls them short runs.  
Steady pilot, good mileage,  
frequent flier credits.  
I swat his war journey,  
splat, downed, then an abrupt end.

### ***Chicago Street Preacher***

Street preacher  
server of the Word,  
pamphlet whore, hand out  
delivery boy,  
fanatic of sidewalk vocals,  
banjo strummer, seeker of coins,  
crack cocaine and salvation within notes.  
Camper on 47th from Ashland  
to California promoting his  
penniless life, gospel forever  
Kingdom here it comes.

## ***Daughter Dawn***

Daughter Dawn wakes under Florida skies,  
blue rain and yellow sunshine,  
unaware of the differences from  
the North, too the South,  
her infant eyes open see  
Merritt Island.  
The Atlantic, inland brackish  
water is in between lives.  
Raise me up with bass fishing.  
Raise me up lassos of alligator dreams.  
Before Titusville, Florida  
Memorial Hospital,  
South Bend, Indiana.  
We Sandy, I lived hallways of the poor.  
Clean the hallways with my mother Edith.  
We survived.  
Glass is a reflection of early decisions glazed.  
Glass is a reflection of sun gone South.  
Life is a petunia a pansy growing in a trailer court.  
Basinets borrowed, repaired and used is for a child.  
Life is a spectrum shade of pink, blues.  
Dawn will always be baby blue.  
Small memories in my brain cash out.  
A father clock stymied by scratch, scabs.  
A different song whistled youth.  
Touch, touch, and resurrect me.  
Dawn was a good baby  
Sandy was a good mother.

# Gary Langford

## Hitler's Altar Boy

Hitler pricked a doll upon the cross.  
He rewrote the living and they rewrote him.  
I remember gas-filling rooms across Europe.  
Flowers grew in the garden of blood and bone.  
When he blew his brains out the world fed  
each of his cracked ribs to the dogs.  
I escaped to Argentina to become a poet,  
sensitively appreciated in a hostile environment.  
When I fell in the Plaza that autumn day  
the government threw a cordon around the city,  
but my smiling killer flew through the clouds.  
The La Plata Poetry Circle mourned my passing,  
publishing a bound leather volume of my works.  
Interest quickly waned. Sales were poor.

## **In My Bookcase**

Age teeters on top of my bookcase.  
Large trunks threaten to fall on me.  
Customs ask if I have anything to declare.  
'Nothing but my own genius.' I am book searched.  
Page by page. 'Oscar Wilde, 1882, New York,' I say.  
'Who? You writers sit on your own toilet seat.'  
I happily harbour under an odd cloud.  
There is a gift in how much we know.  
Books load up around me. There is applause.  
What I think is rain on the roof.  
Shakespeare pots himself in the corner pocket.  
An argument grows. Curses are chucked.  
The discourse is luck. It's a race.  
I call up love in my bookcase.

## **All is True in the Book of Folly**

*For Anne Sexton*

Your confidence spiked on the back of the book.  
We called you madly wonderful, asking for more.  
In the orchard words ripened on empty pages.  
Small creatures grew in blizzards and blackouts.  
You looked out the window. A harsh voice nagged.  
You were ragged. Spectators grew from your papers  
of Jesus. Betrayal was applauded with each nail.  
Prizes began to mock you in hollow rooms.  
Sharp tongues grappled your soul. You struggled,  
only to find there was no way to return.  
Demons courteously ate the winners with purity.  
In a dream you milked a cow dry. Your children cried.  
We must all eat sacrifices, and beautiful women.  
Happy to roll down the hill in one last glorious folly.

## **Come Morning**

Bodies gather like loose leaves.  
They gently finger each other.  
Night smell dribbles out of the black roof of mouths.  
Dawn knocks the kitchen floor, and hums.  
Coffee pots rattle cheerfully along the airways.  
Tangled hair and phlegm snatch for quick breath.  
The narrow horizon is drawn towards us.  
From solid land the sun sneaks out,  
as light as morning. Dew bolts down grass.  
In a dingy we push out from the present bank.  
Nobody checks to see where we go.  
We return to the present. The breakfast rattles.  
Our working day is bacon.  
Gravel in street potholes catches the first shadows.

# Raymond Farr

## Whenever You're Around

Look  
Who's

Suspicious  
Of the wrong words

Fishing strange Hugo Ball  
Out of the dreck of joke soup

In which a duck  
Smoking its plastic poetic face off

Is not part of the act  
Whenever you're around

Whenever you're around  
My cup of language

Is a small order  
Of roast

Potatoes

## **I Haven't Lived**

Existence is madness  
A second fragment answering strangely

& up against a glass wall  
I feel my way out

Of occult sentences in municipal space

& getting myself toast in the morning  
I suppose this is something I asked for

But the cold is a numbing cold  
& someone is saying

Just saying to themselves—

*I haven't lived!*  
*I haven't lived!*

## **The Second One Home**

1.

If we cultivate  
An absence

We walk into omission  
Believing that

The sky is dark music  
We think we take walks

Suddenly recalling  
What it is to eat soufflé

Unlucky at love  
& all alone

The second one home  
Is the second one

Abandoned

2.

When the river  
Takes lives

Hot rain gulps every train track  
Dreaming of

Small windows  
A man can fit through

## **The Trough of Nerves We Call a Language**

Alive & blurred at the hotel door!  
Say hello to

Alive & blurred at the hotel door!  
These are Postmodernism!

A subway running under  
Identical brains flexing like Ted Berrigan

& though Nyquil calms the trough of nerves  
We call a language

A million-footed poem requires  
A presence—

That iron you are holding...  
I seem an empire with mine

## **Angst of the Large Transparent Man**

1.

In order to  
Make his point

That life is a terrible poisonous flower  
That must be nurtured

He invents a garden he dreams  
He'll rouse himself to tend one day

The 10 fingers of Time dragging on  
Like a bad holiday

Out of which sprout  
The 10 little shadows

That love him  
Without fear

2.

The dead weight of  
The emptiness he calls the world

Masturbates in secret  
All over his crooked broken back

So he calls himself Lucky  
Not sincerely overcoming so to speak

But in a dark ironic way  
That makes everyone uncomfortable

The librarian does not believe  
What her own eyes are telling her

& walks around him  
Like a lumpy corpse

After the library comes darkness

# Richard Dillon

## Barbara Hepworth's 'Totem', at the Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield

A wind scallywags the leaves as I'm crossing the bridge  
to a place I should have been before. In an  
artist's air, made up of sheaves and of back-beams casting  
a radial evanescence, the scale of  
it prefigures, prepares, in some respects implicates.

In a hiding way, it haunches its shoulders  
at being indoors and not in necessary light.  
Its un-whiskered white is a memory of  
the whites in your mind: the lamina of towns; Tawny  
Owls as they land, with something of a halo  
about the ruff; when carcasses have gone and a bone  
will come to rest on another bone; or when  
limestone breaks surfaces as a forward spit of foam.

The river shuffles its surface lozenges,  
each one a shadow on its upstream side, slate-silver  
on the down. A flush of Mallards, feeding and  
swimming in defining casts, laughs degenerately  
as I blink in the sun; a bird wheezes in  
the reeds on the other bank; and catenary trees  
make their arches. In its reaches, the river  
is a field of imperfections, fading out of view,  
gallivanting, finagling, flippant in the  
face of everything that's happened, though it's such a thought.

I think of Ulm, that morning at the café  
just before eleven when the bells rang. In the light  
as it was that day the stone of the church had  
a cumulus plasticity of being, all of  
air and a striving to be air: the steeple's  
leggy improvising around solidity, the  
gateways where those who were to enter and leave  
could only be small, the symphony for organ played  
by fingers you only assume. At the end  
we hied-it through the relic streets but stopped, with nothing  
we could say, at the synagogue, which is new.

Very little is moving this curt November night.  
The paving is plumped like the winter buttons  
they fasten on their children's coats, sleepers hardly stir  
except in the pretence that this is their sleep,  
and, outside, a something-bundle forms a heap, and there's  
another, and another, possibly ten,  
each one beneath a paper sheet. The Waggoner claws  
them aside, and lifts in a single movement.  
The cart tolerates its motion; a covey of heads  
jounces on the wood and on the other meat.

## Near Zermatt: The Matterhorn, by Mary Elwell

Triangles of colour, pyramids, if you like.  
The nearest one, a cheese with its corner sliced,  
slopes down from left to right. Its greens -  
lime, apple, willow – are framed by the line  
of a village road that tells us a village is there.  
The spire points to where the Matterhorn points.

I say ‘road’, but it may be a stream. The point  
is the line; it forms, as well, a tapered wedge, like  
the tip of a cake-slice, with a line, just there,  
at the base of the mountain. Village, cheese, cake-slice -  
I use domestic image in-filling these lines -  
and the grass has the cut of an English village green.

The mountain slabs are quite another green -  
viridian, verdigris – greens to make the point  
that nature always gets us, down the line;  
to the left, caverns pit the mountainsides like  
toothless mouths; so, any way its sliced,  
the village is a triumph, simply being there.

To be an artist, you have to paint the air.  
I call on images and myth, like the Green  
Knight who carried his own lately-sliced  
head, for instance, to illustrate the point:  
for, here, the Matterhorn is painted like  
a sail in air, puffed against the skyline.

It’s not that an artist means to spin a line,  
or paints as real what isn’t really there,  
but framing a scene to make it something to like  
is a holy thing, and a next rebirth of green.  
That’s why she has the lines, and mountains, pointing  
home, the village, of which we have a share.

Not exactly the brightest things since sliced  
bread, these notions do draw a line  
at sneering 'she's too safe', or 'what's the point?',  
or 'a photograph would show she'd been there'.  
But, as the song says, it's not easy being green,  
and no-one said you have to paint it like-for-like.

And there's the point: this slice of life  
reality (its greens, those lines) will always  
pit what is against what's simply liked.

## Tea Ceremony

Warm the pot. Two spoons  
of Small Leaf Assam are just  
about enough; you'll have to learn to trust  
yourself, and not assume

that everyone's as nice as you.  
Don't fill it too full;  
to do a thing because it's possible  
is fun, it's true,

but it doesn't get you very far,  
especially when the top goes on  
and liquid oozes out. Cosy on;  
remember who you are

and why you're there. Let it mash  
for five, or maybe more, so find  
a gainful task to occupy your mind,  
like listening to a Clash

CD, or chatting to someone lonely.  
Use a cup or mug of thin  
ceramic; this will mean, when pouring in,  
the loss of heat is only

minimal, the loss of flavour  
nothing, quite the opposite.  
Pour the milk first, just a bit;  
settle back and savour

but, before you do, boil the water  
once again and fill the pot  
so, if you need a second cup, it's hot,  
my soon-departing daughter.

## **Aubade: 'Death is a Return to Nature'**

The curtain closed. He'd listened well,  
and, thinking how he'd found the mix  
of her, the curtain closed and thinking's rictus  
settled there. I fell

to firmament imagining:  
a garden, a gourd of sky, a seat -  
for heaven's sake, our garden seat! -  
the time when all of morning's

parts are present (the still asleep,  
the just awake, the darkness-bidden  
sleepyheads), in terms of minutes, ten,  
no more, to overlap

the several visions humans bring  
to day. And, in my dream, I'm ears,  
the green vitality a thing of years  
and counterpoint to morning's

choral dissonance of now.  
One bird croons a skein,  
another wheezes, another vents the membrane,  
piping up and down.

What else, but that a magpie yells,  
or that a crow should clear its throat,  
or pigeons pause before they sing a note?  
The man who listens well

then drew me back by changing where  
he cast his voice, and spoke of her,  
the lately dead, so things were as they were,  
and morning filled the air.

# Carolyn Gregory

## THREE CHORUSES

The late chorus of crickets led me  
past the square and rotaries,  
past Formaggio's shining purple glass.

Not losing my way  
among the trains and traffic lights,  
I followed candles lighting windows  
under dark night sky.

In his home, new African masks  
hung on the walls, hair shocked  
and wizened on apple-colored wood

while his living room became a parlor  
full of country trios  
and Ben Webster's steady rhythm.

The crickets hummed loudly in the dark.  
We sat down and watched a film  
of young women planting a harvest,  
step by step with their feet

between the rows,  
an ocean of song rising like heat  
flowing through them.

**THEATRE OF JOY (for Mark)**

We enter the opera house  
under cut glass chandeliers,  
following a long rouge hallway  
to the ballet.

Sitting down, a dome of  
filigree surrounds us  
as the seats fill quickly.

A perfect doll sits in an attic  
full of toys  
locked up by her animator.  
Everyone wants to own her!

At the second curtain,  
a bevy of young girls in pink  
overtake the stage,  
skirts flurrying like cherry blossoms.

Wrapping my arm around you,  
I forget my body  
joyfully when a male dancer leaps,  
lifted by muscle into air,

dancing from off-stage  
into the crowd  
as the ballerina flutters  
into his arms.

Joy washes over us.  
Under the dome of filigree,  
two white egrets soar  
with our roaring applause.

## FURNACE AND AFTERWARD

1.

Deep down among the bones in the basement,  
I hid behind the furnace  
that would burn all remaining signs  
of the dead,  
right down to the fillings and fingerprints.

In November, we had been stripped of all  
our silk and photos, luggage rifled and ripped  
apart for fuel.  
The field cattle were sturdier than any of us,  
in a season scattering golden leaves  
like a handful of coins.

Father was shot down when the gunfire started,  
taken out of a second story  
going up in flames.  
When mother stood in the place  
where our door had been axed,  
two soldiers grabbed her  
by the shoulders.  
We never saw her again.

Now we wait in the cellars  
among the bones and flying ash  
that sometimes goes blue  
like the dead eye of winter.

## 2.

The thickest woods saved us.  
We roamed from one abandoned farm  
to the next, hiding the root vegetables  
and potatoes we could find,  
sleeping in wet leaves.

Over time, we fought off a black bear and birds.  
My father's compass helped guide us  
from storms uphill to clear space  
once the killing ended.

My brothers and I scavenged  
for fallen branches, daubed mud  
on our skeleton home.  
We sealed the windows from rain  
with old newspapers  
and strips of rubber  
left from ancient tires.

Because we pulled together, we survived,  
gathering apples and roots,  
drawing water from a scum-covered pond.  
After our home and family were lost,  
the gods of the woods made sure  
we would not fall down deeper or broken.

## THE SWIMMER

My father loved his body,  
frolicking in ocean waves at Coney Island,  
big ferris wheel spinning in the distance.

He ran among fireflies at Saratoga Lake,  
sharing huckleberry pie  
with his family in July,  
watching fireworks flare in the distance.

Strong-shouldered,  
his fifty yard free style was fast,  
speeding past the others  
in a tunnel of waves.

Green-eyed, commanding,  
he won medals in competitions,  
admired by other boys

whose flip turns and hoisted jumps  
filled his thoughts  
when he showered and touched himself  
at the end of the race.

## SEAMSTRESS IN A YELLOW DRESS

In the photo, she sits by a tall window,  
no curtains obscuring  
the green woods of June.

Quietly at the sewing machine,  
she stitches a new hem,  
straight and square beneath the needle.

Once she lost the moon and the stars,  
the roof fell in  
when the funeral procession drove out,  
a man in a tall black hat holding the reins  
of the two horses.

The home became hers since she was left,  
the eldest unmarried daughter  
who had skills to grow root vegetables  
and make jam from all the summer berries.

Rose light glows on the walls around her.  
Purple wild flowers tumble abundantly  
from a clear glass vase.

She sits listening to the machine stitch  
and hum the clear square hem on muslin.  
Her work becomes her  
as she wears her mother's yellow summer dress.

# Paul Tristram.

## Stripped Of Dignity

To see someone stripped of dignity  
is such a terribly sad thing.  
A mother pushing children up the street  
with a black-eye and storm clouds  
around her aching head.  
A gentleman unshaved and dirty  
sat in a month-worn old pair of jeans  
drinking from the dregs of a cheap bottle  
with tears fresh upon his face, broken.  
The elderly and poor huddled  
at the bargain section  
silently willing invisibility  
as they stand like statues waiting  
for the bored young girl with the cart  
in expensive gold hoop earrings and make-up  
to re-fix the already reduced prices.  
Some people ignore or laugh at all of this  
but me, it aches me to my very soul.  
The Beatles were right  
'Where do they all come from?'  
But more importantly I wonder to myself  
'Where will they all go?'

## **Her Silent Shroud**

Within it she sits  
wanting and willing  
perfect stillness.  
Her mind  
only springing into life  
like an 1980's Arcade  
Space Invader game  
to zap away any unwanted  
random thoughts  
as and when  
they intrusively appear.  
Eyes remain mostly closed.  
Breathing  
regular and controlled.  
Muscles and joints  
are hardening at last.  
The 6 hour daily discipline  
is finally working.  
Only water, grapefruit  
and lettuce for 3 months  
and No sun, ever.  
Her skin a smooth porcelain  
of clock face white.  
She is honing and perfecting  
herself  
into the ultimate art form.  
Her will and determination  
are simply astounding.  
She weakly smiles  
at her assured success,  
breaking concentration  
with a slap to her own face.  
Self-scolded,  
she repeats the line  
a thousand times to herself  
inside her patronizing head.  
'A Statue never smiles  
but silently slumbers!'

## **A Crack In The Curtains**

She is now well into her late 80's  
grey-haired for more than 40 years of these.  
This 3 bedroom terraced town house  
is only the 2nd of two houses she's lived in,  
the first house, of course, was her Parents.  
She no longer sleeps upstairs instead she has  
a bed upon the other side of the living room.  
This is where she spends most of her time  
in front of the curtained street facing window.  
She has made a comfortable little set-up,  
an armchair, a coffee table with magazines  
and papers on, next to an old little wireless  
which she uses to listen to poetry and stories,  
especially the dramatizations of the 'Classics'  
that they play almost daily on Radio 4.  
Next to this is a little wooden school stool  
which her portable black and white TV  
lives silently upon except for once a week  
when she watches her David Attenborough  
nature and wildlife programmes upon it.  
One of her Granddaughters comes to visit  
once a week and does all of her shopping,  
bill paying and other nonsense for her.  
She does not visit anyone, her own children  
come visit on occasion but apart from that  
everyone who she knows has now passed on.  
Some of them went donkeys years ago  
just like her beloved Husband William.  
The last of her neighbours went 10 years ago,  
there have been strangers all around her  
left, right and across the road ever since.  
She watches them all each and every day  
through a crack in the curtains  
in her little waiting room world  
in between this existence and the next.

## **The Wrong End Of The Stick**

I am sure she did it on purpose, most times.  
I often observed her delightfully smirking  
at the other persons uncomfortableness.  
Watching like a hawk with prey  
as they exhaustingly tried to backtrack out  
of the verbal trap that she had set them.  
Most happy she would be as they scampered  
and ran all around the houses trying to explain  
and come at the excruciatingly simple point  
from more bizarre and complicated angles.  
Nodding her head blankly, fakely  
at the massive mess they were becoming  
and making of common decency and manners.  
It would be then that I would intervene  
by stepping into her eyesight and smiling.  
The anger would instantly flare up into her face  
and she would dismiss the stuttering fool  
in front of her with a raging curse, oh my!  
Advance like a demented Panzer and demand  
an explanation for my aforementioned humour.  
I always replied with just one word "Nothing!"  
After her screaming had eventually died down  
I would watch her preform her baboon dance  
over-explaining my smiles rudeness and cheek  
with almost heart attack inducing exasperation.  
While I simply grinned more and held on tight  
to the wrong end of the stick that she had merely  
been keeping all safe and warm for me, bless. :)9

## **This Body Is A Burden**

As I lay on the settee upon my side  
gripping the arm with my right hand,  
my entire body as tense as a drum skin.  
Sweating, delirious and practically insane,  
fighting with all the might I can muster  
just to stop my soul from breaking  
free from its flesh and bone prison cell.  
The echoing waves and jumpy spasms,  
internal rollercoaster as I rock to and fro  
with determination to stop and cork  
this revolt from within...once again.  
The first time that I experienced this  
I was living in Cwmbran, 21 years old  
laying in a bath with a month hangover.  
I had to grip onto the side of the bath  
to stop it and it frightened me to death.  
I went upstairs to tell my girlfriend  
but she was having none of it at all,  
she shook her head whilst laughing  
and told me that I was off my rocker.  
I guess strangely we were both right?  
Yet one day I will prove it to myself,  
it will happen again and I won't fight  
I'll let go and just like a kite without  
a string I'll soar wilder than ever before.

## **The Devil Lives In Some Of Us But Hides In Us All**

And so you have to be very careful  
with those negative, hateful feelings,  
the bitterness that poisons your soul.  
It's a bit like sticking lighted sticks  
of dynamite up an unpredictable  
pit bull's arse and then chaining  
the demented beast to your own heart.  
It is happiness that slays your enemies  
not negativity and violence...besides  
the Devil isn't interested in your sunshine  
he will soon bore and go look elsewhere.

## **My Eccentricities Are Just Like Christmas Lights Around My Personality**

Do not take to heart the snide remarks  
of the everyday Tittle-Tattlers.  
They have no Substance, Depth  
or Magic to their chicken-like self's.  
These Cowards hurt when they are alone!  
Anything Unique that You might do will  
be instantly condemned and discouraged.  
Any Talent revealed will be ridiculed.  
Any Genuine Thought Process chastised.  
When you Shine (Just as you should!)  
they will try to put out your Flame  
by smothering it with poisonous envy.  
Take Heart and do not let them!  
Leave them in their squirming snake pit  
of pathetic insecurity and bitterness bile.  
Laugh, shake it all off of your shoulders  
then walk onwards into the Sunlight of  
your own Talented, Creative Wonderment.  
Push yourself out into that Greatness,  
relish immensely in your Individuality  
whilst creating Miracles out of Nothing.  
Harness the Wild Forces within you  
and sledge down new mountainsides  
of Magnificence and Glory every day.  
My Eccentricities are just like Christmas  
Lights around my Personality,  
find Yours within you, Switch them on  
and Dazzle and Daze the Entire World.

## I Quit

“I quit!”  
said the man who hadn't finished  
to the dwarf with a limp.  
”She wouldn't come home!”  
The dwarf with the limp  
shook his head in understanding  
walked away and drowned himself.  
the man who quit  
never finished, also.

## **Dying In Between It**

As I strip through the shit  
the tears and the years  
I find my strength once more.  
With guilt in one hand  
and innocence in my clenched right  
I face the new day, ready.  
This is more than survival,  
This has a purpose out-seeding my eyesight  
I wobble back onto my defiance,  
and step forward, armed,  
gentle flowers will have to wait.

# A.J. Huffman

## *Struck*

This tunnel is indistinguishable  
from the others. My hands are moles,  
motivational diggers desperately searching  
for the light. My third eye finds a spark,  
a diminutive glint barely visible between  
folds of black walls. I aim my ax,  
crack this world of darkness,  
ferret out molecular magic. Even in the  
encompassing absence of cut, I can see  
this one is destined for mounting on top of  
banded gold.

### ***The Oreo Cookie was Lying***

in the rain. Broken down the middle, and missing  
her creamy center. I thought of her poor family  
back in the package, how sad they would be to discover  
what fate she had befallen. No quick consumption  
at eager child's fingers, instead a random disembowelment  
by anonymous tongue, wasteful fingers that tossed  
her brittle chocolate pieces to the elements, left her to  
soil and sog in acidic shower that felt nothing  
like milk.

## ***Glass Eyes***

I am followed by visions  
of emptiness. I feel  
the motion, like static,  
waiting to be touched.  
I am conductor, tangible  
movement toward tactility.  
I can breath  
only in the echoing  
space suspended between  
blinks.

### ***Of Flight and Fantasy***

Lightning bugs glitter the space  
between willow and lawn, sparking  
as they follow their instincts, the  
only true beacon among the fog.  
Dawn's dew rises, evaporates  
in emulated tendrils of non-burning  
smoke, dissipate before reaching  
first bough. This early-morning  
montage is a magician's show,  
curtains holding breath  
as flash of costumed sparkle flairs  
with flip of wrist, clap of hands, and  
focus is swayed. Eyes believe  
in the absence, that only moments before  
was alive with electricity. They call it  
momentum, dispelled.

# KJ Hannah Greenberg

## Underrated as a Crummy Texts

Benign neglect is far too satisfying  
An introduction to announcing bathroom  
Intentions for most reporters to abandon  
Accounts of relative progress, or function  
Oblivious to others.

Additional convergent media flatter no one  
Beyond satellite dishes, ailurophiles, rice cookers,  
Cause nouns, intent upon showing up on snow  
Days, presidents' birthdays, alternate weekends,  
To rooted in junky predictions.

Dingles, dunderdoodles, fluffheads, odd balls,  
All ought never to be sold underestimated;  
Idiots exist among barkeeps, nurses, politicians.  
Metallic-colored car stink like much sour tzatziki,  
Deprived of personal growth.

Tracking home pages' cough syrup ads,  
Reading users' histories, jumping trains,  
Engaging in algebra, deflecting torture,  
Proves unhealthy unless mutual efforts,  
Return for s'more.

Vacations, more than the sum of shopping,  
Cartoons, or amusement parks, evoke pirated  
Victories, lost tickets, trinkets, shabby things,  
Morph consumer guides on parenting,  
Support insanity.

Immediately, the amount/kind of individual utility  
Depends on equating electronic education with fun.  
Suspiciously, a head space's worth of air remains  
Following bungee jumping, maybe re-embodiment.  
(See enclosed).

# Post Scriptum

## Zahira Rahman

Tonight I am reading what the rain is writing.  
It has returned from its travels  
And records the city and its kindness.

The great shop fronts- homes for the night  
The kind-furred street dogs keeping children warm  
And all the hors d'oeuvres in garbage cans.

Eyes and ears stolen from light  
and gifted to dwellers of the dark hours

The city is kind all night.  
In the morning the city hides its wounds

'The city is kind' writes the rain in tears of the wind.

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