

# *Ygdrasil*

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# Introduction



## Escapees

“Welcome. Step inside,” said the beast,  
“I have prepared a sumptuous feast  
and provided trumpian decoys  
for you farm girls and bumpkin boys.”  
Note the standard trappings and tricks,  
the grand diaphanous fabrics,  
quaff the expertly posed cajole,  
sexual, you will be made whole,  
says the crotch leaning by the door  
“you can be with me and much more,”  
partake of the salt and passion,  
pray at the altar of fashion,  
all of paradise just inside,  
glittering eyes, you know they’ve lied,  
I’m aghast at how lads are led,  
maids bow placid before the mask,  
and no one asked, “hey! Where’s your head?”

# Heather Joyce Ferguson

## 666 Juareira Do Norte

[based on a street scene in Brazil captured by Klaus J. Gerken from Google Earth]

1.

*February. It's sweltering. Thunderheads stretch to heaven. The favela folk scurry for cover.*

*A crash of lighting cleaves the clarion sky. Pickpockets scatter. Heroin addicts startle from pilfered dreams. Thieves jettison hot watches, and time dissolves. The backways are littered with sketchy schemes quickly abandoned. The here and now explodes, majestic, and hurtles love beyond simple desire.*

*A priest reads his roll call with a scolding air. Inspection time, dear ladies of the alleys. Bare your bosoms in deep contrition. Your tithe is owing. Offer what little you have. Forget social distance. Mary would understand.*

*On an alien stage a world away, the Rockettes freeze in mid-kick. Sisters know. Fused legs are the wages of sin, oh sweet marionettes. Ask any mermaid. The film sprocket advances. The scene unfolds.*

2.

*I marshal my tattered selves. We crowd along the finish line of a cancelled race. Who dares to take that final step?*

*Remember the orphanage? We miss our mother tongue. Threads of a lost language unwind catlike among us, rubbing against our legs, tripping us up, insistent. We stumble and crawl forward.*

*What is the colour of freedom? Take a rainbow. Weave it through another. And another, weft and warp, staves pulsing outward in infinite regress.*

*An infusion of light seeps into our wounds. Our petals curl inward like dying leaves. Silken cocoons. Dreams without end.*

3.

*The crotch is the core of the universe. It hums on all frequencies. Can you hear it? It resonates in your bones.*

*Gaia licks the odours bubbling from primal swamps. On earthlike worlds, the flicker of will-o'-the-wisps. Creatures assume their destinies. You will lead many parallel lives. You will counsel your unborn selves.*

*Celestial celebration: the favela flaunts its miniskirts and tight tops, the rattle of cheap bling. Murals burst onto whitewashed walls. Carnival rises, glorious with marching bands, glitter and rum. Magnolia petals float down on the revelling crowds.*

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# Peter Mladinic

## Capitalists

Nancy Sidley owns the delegation. Pale,  
seated in rows of straight-back chairs  
they look like mirrors in storage.  
She knows the violins will be played  
not smashed over wrestlers' heads  
in a ring at the armory.

She knows the ups and downs of fear,  
the dead eyes of outlaws she's seen  
while brushing her hair in a mirror.  
Evelyn owns a compost, Adele and Adolph  
a tall oak at the bottom of a hill.  
Walking in that oak's shade Nancy

has heard and felt acorns crunch.  
Bill owns the champagne magnums,  
and the suave look he wears  
at the Labor Day carnival. Someone  
owns the Ferris wheel. Nancy  
doesn't know who, but she knows Frank

owns lumber, Jack a pair of dice,  
Dennis and Regina the Manor Tavern  
and Margaret a pearl handled switchblade  
found one Saturday morning in the street  
after she stepped out her door.  
She put it in her jeans back pocket

and kept walking. At the Candy Store  
of Eternity, owned by Otto, she made sure  
no one saw the knife. At home,  
in her room with the door shut, Margaret,  
seeing her reflection in a mirror,  
pushed a button, up sprang the blade.

## Declawed Cats Shouldn't Live Outside

Put on an optimistic face,  
It's the only way to meet oblivion.  
Put on the light blue t-shirt  
of optimism. Go to the Cinema East  
and watch *Public Enemies*.

Wax a Chevy, buy a bag of Cheetos,  
find some chalk and write *Sheila*  
on a wall. Scramble an egg.  
Have a cat declawed, though  
for that get a professional.

Peel the skin off an orange.  
It's no crime to think about oblivion,  
but, too much,  
you won't be popular.  
Sometimes you sink into a funk.

On your thigh get a dagger tattoo  
with the name Miguel across it.  
Go on date,  
ride a rollercoaster, scream.  
It won't be the scream of oblivion.

## Enchantress

She casts a spell on a man.

She knows how. The secret

is in her dark flashing eyes,

and it is a secret.

She's not telling anyone.

It's better kept secret

from all, except herself.

She knows how.

Some things about herself

she doesn't know. But this one

she knows, for she must

because she does it very well.

What's her secret?

How does she cast her spell?

She's not telling.

Better not to whisper

even one word about it.

It happens slowly,

at times quickly, in silence.

It's good. The spell itself

is good. The man, as if

hypnotized, under her spell,  
does what she wants,  
which is fine, pleasing  
both to him and her.

*Enchantress, I imagine*

*sitting under a tarp*

*in the woods, out of the rain,*

*the rain all around me,*

*falling all around me.*

*That summer rain*

*is the nearness of you.*

## First Haircut

In the small shop, in his mother's lap,  
scissors clipping his fine  
three years old hair,  
he won't remember mirrors,  
the electric razor, the barber's hand,

but something of this hour,  
like a memory of first steps  
or some other early childhood first,  
may come back.

Such moments light the dark hour  
we fade from loved ones and all things.  
For him, may that time be far off.

His mother's pride,  
he keeps cool under the strange blade.

## Forgot Kid in Bar

Schaeffer has his favorite this  
and that. His favorite female singer,  
Nancy Bradley, would be his age,  
she died decades before he heard her  
voice, such depth, clarity and range.  
She chain smoked, and cigarettes  
were not helping, nor was alcohol.  
She married and had a daughter,  
a short troubled marriage and finally  
her ex got custody of the daughter,  
but before that, there was a day or  
night Nancy, in a bar, got so drunk  
she walked, or stumbled or staggered  
out of the bar, not aware her kid  
an infant was there. Good singers  
do bad things sometimes, or don't do  
what they should, or like leave  
the infant with a sitter or something  
Nancy neglected to do. It's a story  
Schaeffer heard, but mostly her voice  
what remains is the thing, a voice  
to his ear like no other, such range  
clarity, the voice of Nancy Bailey,

what she's remembered for, renown  
to those who appreciate her songs.

# E. Martin Pedersen

## Happy Capricorn

For my sixteenth birthday mother gave me  
a scrap of typed love poetry  
the only poem I can't forget

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*When of thy earthly goods thou art bereft*

*And in thy palm two coins are left*

*Buy bread and with the dole*

*Buy hyacinths to feed thy soul.\**

She did present me with a bulb  
I've kept it buried long enough  
I cannot see my mother again  
father's beside her in the end  
yesterday I bought rich bread  
and a book I hadn't read  
a fishy treat for the cat  
and a hyacinth after that  
when I look at it I see  
how my mother still loves me.

\*(by Abū-Muhammad Muslih al-Dīn bin Abdallāh Shīrāzī, aka Saadi of Shiraz, 13th century Persian poet)

## Nothing Would Work

If I had no feet

I'd need no shoes

If I had no screwdriver

I'd need no screws

I invented those screws with a double slot

I made some money, not a lot

Yet no screwdriver would do

If I had no shoes

A brogan shoe or a slipper

Flathead or Phillips too

I need you all

You are precious

Nothing would work

Nothing would be true

Without feet

Without screws

## Real California

If you come to California

You'll see brown hills

Shining in the sun

Come on down to California

Butterflies welcome you

When the whales run.

If you go into the mountains

The people are friendly there

As a WOW morning sky

Climb into our high Sierras

Make a granite bed

With a creek lullaby.

Avoid the cities in California

Where they make sour bread

Walk out into any field

To see no-makeup California

No wine or electronics

No scepter to wield.

Then, what is real

The blue essence?

I'm calling for you

You and me

And the Joshua tree

In California.

I'm calling for you, California.

## A GORGON HONEYMOON

The page was open to a picture of a Gorgon.

Monsters were the last thing on my mind.

But there you were, on the bed, with the book wide open.

I was suddenly a nervous Odysseus at the entrance to Hades.

I would have been content with Botticelli.

Or even the winged horse Pegasus.

But you had to have your illustrated annotated “Metamorphoses.”

What honeymoon would be complete without it?

This is what comes of marrying between semesters.

So much was still to be known.

At least you didn't complain when I leaned over,

closed the book on Medusa once and for all.

Instead, your body appeared like magic.

It curled up into mine, pointing your face my way.

We were in a motel room off a New Hampshire highway.

Your gaze turned me to anything but stone.

# John Grey

## MONIQUE'S HATS

She figures even the loveliest face  
can do with some enhancement.

So why not a hat?

Just like her grandmother wore,

with brim and fluting,

bows and veils,

even a flower blooming from its band.

In the modern age,

where unadorned is haute couture,

why not, at least,

flirt with the past,

here in the boutique,

with six or seven bonnets to try on

and a full-length mirror

to flatter every pose.

But, by the fourth,

something more of a beret,

with bohemian hints,

she was weary of the 30's,  
bored imitating the old photographs  
in her mother's attic trunk,  
ready to return to the present day,  
with bare head, no makeup,  
and a tiny tattoo  
at the base of her throat.

Besides, she didn't want to keep Jamie waiting.  
He was parked illegally.  
And in the 21<sup>st</sup> century right where she left him.

Looking over the concrete balustrade,  
a man, early forties, holds his head steady,  
his mouth licks itself into stillness,  
his eyes blaze like heated rum.

In the shadow is his man-servant  
whispering in a vague European accent,  
draped in a long, concealing coat.

It's an old decaying castle,  
fit only for clambering tourists,  
with a guide at every signpost  
and a gift shop in the basement.  
But he looks as if he belongs  
in his dark suit, and his air  
of cloistered romance language,  
with his icy servant in the background,  
no chance of melting in the sluggish sun.

A young girl says he's royalty.

Her mother nods.

From what she's read,  
the continent is overrun  
with penniless counts.

A boy has him marked as a vampire.

His father jokes with the kid.

But it's still daylight.

In this brightness, he figures,

the undead should be dust.

The girl fantasizes that the man

has an eligible son,

the handsomest in the realm.

She stares down at her sneakers.

Scruffy looking sure,

but their time as glass slippers will come.

The boy's hand grips around

an invisible sword.

He daydreams of rushing up stairs

to the parapets,

facing down the demons

before lopping off their heads.

The mother wonders what it would be like  
to be invited to a regal garden party.

The father's fancies involve something called Fenway Park.

From the high point of this crumbling ruin,  
the two don't so much look out as survey.  
This could have all been theirs once,  
whether royalty overseeing serf cottages and farms  
or Dracula and his ilk feasting on the plentiful virgins.

The girl wants a photograph for her travel scrapbook.

The boy says she's wasting film.

When her roll's developed, she'll have nothing  
but a snapshot of no one.

Their mother says it's time to leave.

There's a church five miles hence that's aching for their visit.

Their father's already hunting for the keys to the rental car.

He curses all castles and churches under his breath.

How wearisome the past can be, he reckons.

It's been a long day stuffed with too much information.

So this castle was sacked in 1456.

Right now, 1456 sounds to him like the beginnings of a bar bill.

Later that night, at the hotel,  
the father's wishes coalesce in a tumbler of icy beer.  
His wife sips something pale pink  
as she pours through tomorrow's unrelenting brochures.  
The girl reads a book of princes and princesses before the lobby fire.  
The boy plays the solitary video game.  
The royal vampire and his valet  
drink cognac at a far table,  
discuss their real estate business back in Sofia.  
The imaginary is mostly done for the evening.  
It's time for the truth to find something to do.

## IN CASE YOU ASKED

Love must be more than just  
the passion, the tenderness.

Doesn't it have to do laundry,  
go grocery shopping,  
buy a lot with a little.

And shouldn't it also be walks  
through the neighborhood,  
waving to people it knows  
or doesn't know,  
whether or not they too  
are in the same condition.

And yes, it's wanted  
at the used car lot,  
now that the vessel  
in which it was once incubated,  
is falling to pieces.

Love must take care of the rat problem.  
And there's family for it to suffer through,  
boring uncles, inquisitive aunts,  
cousins who are more successful  
than those who give it shelter.

Love has to stay in there  
when the smells are at their worst,

the paychecks, their thinnest,

the cough, its loudest.

It must acknowledge that

there is something in the next room

called a toilet bowl

and within the pink walls

of that pimple on the chin,

an overripe lump of pus.

Love can't get away

from what sickens,

what disrupts,

what reddens the eyes,

what sharpens the tongue.

Sure, love is an affair of the heart.

But not just the one

I scribble on a sheet,

pierce with an arrow.

There's a sloppy pumping red thing

that would do anything for love.

## **ORANGE MAN**

There you are, on television once again,  
upping the threat we all are under  
to the point where the country is afraid of itself –  
more prattle designed to keep me indoors.

If you only would tell me things I know already,  
like wintergreen has bloomed and the warblers returned,  
the lake thawed, trees are coopting the new season.  
Yes, predator devours prey. But to survive not substantiate.

# Post Scriptum

## Charlotte

### ALL OUR LIVES

All our lives we confuse love with addictions and passions  
Passing from one hand to another  
changing thousands of lives  
We walk through the heads of the essence of ideas  
Introducing yourself into the illusion of flying.

What in particular is it -  
Just a reflection of  
Bygone days.

We walk past  
Callous body and soul.

And finally, keep quiet.

We do not see the sky, we do not see human miracles.

We confuse openness with falsehood  
And to falsehoods succumb.

Finally,  
When already tired of rushing about  
You understand it's time to pack up  
And tear and throw that heavy cross.

To which you are attached and nailed forever.

And I'll say to you, my friend, heartily,  
What a desperate fool it is who thinks  
That the past has gone only like this.

Run away from everyone and cover the body with concrete  
And jump down - to crash on a jamb,

Or open those wings that hurt for a long time  
And not be afraid of falling, and fly there again,  
Where under a gust of wind you will not fall down in any way.

\*

Charlotte: its poem on translated

Charlotte: i wrote yesterday

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