

C. E. JANECEK

Heaven to Those Who Are Asleep
a collage of medieval songs and chants, 810-1300

I'm left with clouds to spread across
the width of an ocean. Night holds
intemperance without the ecstasy,
throwing ice upon the fire. Dawn is a
medicine for shivering, in the grace of
uncreated light

you are the sun, turning ice into
water into honey into sweet desire:
a spreading stream, the bright mist
of waking. Fragile mornings restore
me, when I meet your eyes,
fearless, I take your hand at sunset,
your lips a stream

freezing over. I'm left with
clouds to spread across the
width of this ocean, saying,
Heaven to those who are asleep,
heaven to those who are
asleep—

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“Heaven to Those Who Are Asleep” is a collage of medieval songs and hymns:

“I en polles amarties,” a Byzantine troparian by the 9th c. poet Kassia

“Oidche mhath leibh,” a Scots Gaelic song

“Laeta lux est hodierna,” an Irish sequence for the feast of St. Patrick

“Thomas gemma Cantuariae / Thomas cesus in Doveria,” an English motet

“Shen khar venakhi,” a 12th c. Georgian hymn with text attributed to King Demetrius I

“Rolandskvadet,” a Norwegian ballad

“Drømde mig en drøm i nat,” a Nordic song

“Dér voghormia,” an Armenian chant

About the poem and the process of composing it, C. E. Janecek writes:

“Heaven to Those Who Are Asleep” is a poem from my undergraduate thesis, *Strange Medicine*, which I wrote in 2019. I sought to revive foundational texts through cento, cut-up, and collage in order to challenge masculinist notions of single authorship and view history through a non-linear lens. Some of my poems in the collection wove modern and medieval texts, others reimagined the lives of Shakespearean characters, and others still, like “Heaven to Those Who Are Asleep,” simply came from appreciating the traditional hymns themselves. This poem wouldn’t exist without the phenomenal artistic and academic work of Utopia Early Music, founded by Prof. Christopher LeCluyse and Prof. Emily Nelson, who spend tireless hours translating hymns and folk songs from Old English, Latin, and many other languages, along with all of the musicians at Utopia bringing to life music as it might have sounded hundreds of years ago. Going to their concerts transported me to a different time and helped me approach the poetry and music of the Middle Ages from a place of curiosity and creativity.

C. E. Janecek is an assistant managing editor at *Colorado Review* and a junior editor at *F(r)iction*.

Janecek’s work has appeared in *Permafrost*, *The Florida Review*, *Peach Mag*, *Timeworn*, *Lammergeier*, and elsewhere. Online at carolynjanecek.wixsite.com/writer.

HERON TREE
27 January 2021
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