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Introduction

Colin James

I'M PRETTY SURE I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE

Elasticity and the human bull
attending to its inertia.
A plethora of advisers
continually adjusting their perspectives.
" On your right, the hanging gardens."
An internal seat without sanctuary,
doors and hallways, fearless antibodies.
The next always an indisputable success.
Arms tucked underneath,
one foot sticking out on top for crunching numbers.
There was that one time when
underestimating the Mendenhall Gorge,
several days were spent in doubt
then the Prospectus Inclinator
kicked in restoring perpetuity,
and we rolled like cake
across the fortuitous vastness.

Ralph Monday

Winter 2001

Glaciations, though a long time ago, move
About the window. Skies, iron gray,
Envelop all that is-for the moment.

Time will change.

Two young twin poplars resist the
Wind outside the window. Frail, still,
They soar above bare land, bare trees

Awaiting

Primal spring. They are not my Grandfather's
Yellow wood. Those were older than these, bigger,
Possessing a nobility of age.

He cut them anyway.

Pregnant youth, two giants twined together,
Topped by a chainsaw thirty years ago,
Not even around a house.

Protect the garden, he said.

That garden, that land, revisited,
Lies fallow. Twisted weeds and briars
Erupt there now.

I guess papaw was right.

The Second Cloning

After 1999 attempts, Jesus was cloned on the 2000th.
Difficult, since genetic science had not yet mastered
The intricacies of melding a resurrected Creator of
The Universe, or the Son of God, the ultimate Savior

Of all the colored races.

The zygotic implantation precise in the Virgin's womb
Guided by the scientist's cool syringe after attempts
From the Shroud of Turin, various bloodied medieval relics
Acquired by shadowed secrecy that ranged geographical
From Jerusalem to Beijing.

The Vatican finally stepped in, grudgingly, after the internet
Blew the genie's bottle away, and coughing, gently, informed
The Swedish consul that they, perhaps, perhaps, might be able
To give Roman assistance.

After all, Gods always take root in cold places.

We have a foreskin, in our vaults, that the Jewish circumcision
Preserved; not John the Baptist, long before that momentous
Event-shortly after the Manger Birth-as prescribed by
Tradition, the Knife saved the Life. The Three Wise Men from
The East, after ladling spiced Gifts, following the Star Custom,
Preserved the Life in a clay bottle.

Dollops of hay, a donkey, and they were on their way.

That is the background of the Story, my Chucklings.
The rest is yet to Epiphany.

Madonna, singing Catholic hymns, had already been prepped.
Cloned herself (she would inform the world of this at the MTV
Music awards), named the girl Mary, and protected her Virginity
For fifteen years from wayward thugs like the New Cloned Elvis
And Dennis Rod (man) mond.

The Enquirer, CNN, Turn (HER) TV had all caught the scent
Spiraling, spider like, from beer induced typings over THE WEB.

Some kinda shipwreck was up.
This was BIG. Geosynchronous bleepings spawned the Word World.

EVERYbody wanted a piece of the action.

The Dahli Lama flew in from exile: the Communist Chinese
Shrugged their atheistic heads and even chanted a few OMMS;
The Southern Baptists, as usual, had not a clue of what to do.

So, the SCENE was set, the manger prepared, carefully synchronized,
Of course by specialists from all the sciences: archeologists sifting
Through the sands for the ancient beehive, NASA engineers coordinating
Spacestuff along with Cornell astronomers, the EXact Bethlehem palace
Where postmodern census takers gleefully rang the bell.

A few Dollies and Mollies, hastily arranged for the viewing masses
Sucking down bad Budweiser, lay down gently with lions outside.
While the cameras clicked, the corporates licked means of a new computer
Archetype circumscribed by the faithful, faithless populous fueled by
A dynamo-electricity and the Virgin equally important-both spawning
A new age and loved exactly the same.

Somewhere the message got mixed and nixed.

No matter my mad hatters, resurrection was up, Christmas around the
Corner, a few bleeps away, and the sheep were prepared.

Get IT all on CAMERA this time around.

Industrial Light & Magic provided the Star, the Three Wise Men;
The camels by a Palestine projection company;
Vegas showgirls were jettied in (the Rockettes lost the bid), beplumed,
Bespeckled, amazingly sequestered, they danced and pranced like
Santa's deer awaiting blastoff. (PUT IN TITLE OF SONG OF BIRTH HERE)

The web scorched along primed for Prime Time.

And the birth began, natural, of course-The Mary could
Do no other; Joseph didn't even wring his hands, being
A good Jew. The cameras clicked, the lenses flicked on
The grandest, waiting two thousand year epiphany.

After a few convoluted contractions (lens in lens out; there about
The Walk About), His Head emerged feet first, mewling, screaming,
The Savior looking for His own redeeming Adam's tart; there began

The Second Start.

Computers clicked, ratings flashed, the stock market almost crashed-
By the Second Cloning. Then, the Moment Endeared, Incarnation complete,
HE EMERGED (THE TWO MICHAELS JORDAN AND JACKSON WERE
NO WERE TO BE FOUND),

But, my dear faithful foundlings, the One emerged after a 2000 year hiatus,
By a bit of foreskin DNA that the Vatican didn't wish to discourse with in
The First Place (they have their own problems); and the Swedish Renaissance
Complete CNN clicked on.

Jesus was reborn, precisely, on December 25, 2001, at 12:00 EST.
Man, these ratings would be good!

Cameras zoomed in, chocolates and popcorn were in every believers'
Homes, plus a toot toot toot or a drink or two.

"Mary, what do you feel," said a Springer Clone.
"I feel-I I I feel something playing my mind mime."

He Came He Saw He Conquered Carpe Diem

Jesus reborn came out obsidian black.

CNN cut immediately to an old Andy Griffith show.

FADE TO BLACK.

The Hollygrail

Johnny Blue had been spiritless since birth.
Even his mother noticed when he popped
Out like a sleek seal-sorta sideways-

That boy ain't got no soul.

She traded him to his father for a couple
Of tickets to Disneyland and future
Remuneration to be named.

Johnny's father had a soul once, but
Lost it fishing for salmon in Alaska.
The jeans do tell.

Totem poles and grizzly bears quickly
Became boring; then his father either
Died, or went away-choose the story.

There poor Johnny was, like a convict
Out on parole, already doomed for a
Crime not quite sure of.

He had never even heard of Kafka or castles.
He sensed something was amiss, but like
A lemming turned the wrong way

He never could quite make the leap.
Children threw mudballs at him.
Critters shunned him.

Johnny scratched his head and went to
The chief totem guy. Blueboy offered
Some tobacco but the major pole folk

Wanted cold Uncle Sam. He gave him
What he had, which wasn't much, threw
In his best slingshot.

Dude broke out his premium feathers and
Consulted the hawk sitting blind and
Mute on top of the pole.

No soul, said the man.

What?

No soul. Nuff said. Wander on down to the heartland,
My chicken dumpling; look for it there.

MTV, devil music filled him up for awhile,
As well as bad blonde sitcoms and an occasional
Western or two.

This became unsatisfying. He went to the black
Clubs where there was plenty of soul food,
Tried his best at a whirling dance dervish.

Brothers only sadly shook their heads.
No soul.

He tried the gay bars and floor shows.
The powdered, skirted butterfly boys
Looked better than he did.
No soul.

He tried political rallies; bad mistake.
Politicians and lawyers definitely have
No soul. Skunks got better jive.

Finally found it: at a Kmart blue light
Special right between cheap lingerie
And last year's Christmas lights.

The Hollygrail, a plastic goblet, a bit
Tattered and stained with manufactured
Holly leaves sticking out the top.

Man, it shone like a TV's dead channel
Late at night. Cheap, too.
Buck fifty.

Blue man polished that thing up like
A brass general, put it under his pillow,
Took it out every day to examine like

The tooth fairy's golden gift.
His life changed; even got a girlfriend
And a cat.

Picked them up foraging in one of the
Best downtown dumpsters.
Knew he was on a holy roll

Because the electronic preachers
Spat out his schtick like an animal
Control officer on a better day.

Till his pavement babe started to
Feed the cat chittlings out of his
Hollygrail.

Definitely changed his attitude.
You don't touch god thing, baby.
It got soul.

He kicked her out, but kept the
Cat, better pussy anyway.
Cat died; Johnny couldn't find the Hollyheart.

So he called 900 numbers,
The psychic network at least a
Trinity of times.

Bennie Hen put him onto the trick;
Springer zeroed in like a Kamikaze
Planting Shinto for the Pope.

That's when he went on the show.
That's when he sniffed the scent,
Took to wearing Old Spice

Got a gig of his own in Nashville.
Sported a California tan, hustled advice
To the Scientologists, dug the genie

Out of the bottle, ran the game on infomercials
Sold soul to a million freaks
Before the feds busted him

Because his garbage girl (the faithless twit)
Turned him in on a technicality and Slick Willie
Became his guru.

Samhain Is Gone Now

Samhainam is gone now, receded into the temporal
Past until another turning brings completion.
Women and men, men and women gather together
In ancient haunted forests where all masks fall;
Circled together around bonfires, shadows thrown
Wherein a seasonal truth beating within primal human
Cell reduces shadow and brings remembrance.
In the memory is dancing joy; satyrs and stars,
Sticks and stones that break no bones, the wind
Whistles merrily after; seasons come, seasons go;
Stars and steers, non-delicate deer model the people;
From sun and wind and sky, from moon and moth
And heartbeat, revelers revel far from caves--
Hearken the life of an old, old grave.

Moon Crescent

Crescent, swanlike, the moon glides silvery
beyond a human cognition sky.
There are birds in the clouds singing seed songs.
Airplanes float as Japanese fireflies in a test
between sun and moon.

Heaven and earth suspended between thumb, index--
some type old story thrills the genetic limbs of man,
beast, bird, rock, or tree.

Human pulsing hearts like a sunflower quasar thrust
into a bad science fiction story, like a pulsar emanating
magical radiation waves, like a gigantic gravity ridden black
hole sucking up all flowered light so that the human brain,
bipolar, forgets the sleepless halves, goes circuitous once again
around the remembered forgotten not.

Hunger is there in a thousand million different manifestations:
thirst for the cicada, drinking the whale, living the dog:
runes, symbols, hieroglyphic story written in not only stone,
but also in the blind minddance of all stories ever human encumbered

till there is light

that must darkness eaten be

like the moon
like the snake shedding its shadow.

Then is the crescent romantic cognition.

Joseph Farley

When It Rains It Pours

happiness became a habit
when you were near,
chasing away the memories
of all the dark years.

so much sunshine
after clouds,
it seemed it would never
rain again.

then it all came down.
it all came down.
we got stuck in the downpour,
drops falling fast and hard.

a grain of sand

one grain of sand
among infinite granules

one grain of sand
longing

for a single drop
of grace

to create an oasis
in an endless desert

one grain of sand
one grain of sand

lost in the desert
of hunger and doubt

Finding The Foot On The Neck

Maybe it was always there,
but we did not notice,
our minds clouded with dreams,
unable to recognize the scent
of dirt filling our nostrils,
but things change and you can feel
the pressure of the heel
grinding into your vertebrae.
You cannot rise. It will not let you.
Your existence or what remains of it
is one with the earth beneath your face.
You can hear the laughter
and feel the sunshine,
but you cannot run or sing.
Freedom and the sky
is for those who rule above.
You are learning, being taught
your proper role and place.
You start to crawl
and practice bowing
knocking your forehead
on stones.

Bite The Dog

(for Big Mike)

Liquor is not an every day thing,
but there are days and nights and weeks
when a man must be drunk.

To be less is to tempt
the wheels of fate
to lash him further
without anesthesia
or the least hope
of survival
with any sense of self
intact.

Booze relaxes the body,
and liberates the mind,
lubricating the soul
as it seeks winged flight,
if not to the hereafter
to the next island
after this one
in an ocean
of suffering seas.

Gurgle and Roar

My stomach talks too loud,
making noises when it should be quiet.
The dog growls and scratches at the wall.
The cat curls on a chair and sleeps.
But my stomach eats, only of itself,
and brags all the while
of its digestive strength.

Corpses

On my evening walk I came across a flattened something,
mammalian, pressed as thin and stiff as cardboard,
crushed and chucked into the weeds by the side of the road
by the wheels of a passing truck.

Closer inspection showed a head with eyes and teeth.
The corners of this dead wafer still had claws.
Desiccated as dried cod, but with tufts of fur and remnants of a tail,
it might have once been an opossum, a cat or a raccoon.

Further along I saw in the grass a circle of moving gray fur.
Slow so not to startle I approached expecting a juvenile
playing near the open mouth of an underground nest.
The creature, certainly a coon this time, was not alive.

The puckering under skin and hair was caused
by an ocean of maggots that in places was visible,
writhing white beads of decay flowing in and out
of empty eye sockets and dripping from nasal cavities.

I stared overlong at the banded skull and the carcass
alive with a motion not its own,
and was passed by a pair of runners ignorant in their haste
of multiple dramas and everyday tragedies
laying like the future so near their feet.

For Those Whose Pens Have Been Broken

In the land of the iron fist
poets are feared
by those who hold the chains
and loved by those wear them.

Of course these menaces must be squelched.
Broken or dead their bodies bleed ink,
their words staining more than prison walls
leaving their black smudge
on the pages of history
and the consciences of readers.

Even A Dog Knows

A beaten dog whines in the night, but not too loud for fear of another kick.
A beaten dog knows that love and loyalty are only words recited in the dark
to mask the fact of the leash and the hand that holds it.

A beaten dog, as all dogs do, will look up at the full moon and feel the urge to howl,
but his lungs fail him as he longs not just to shout greeting but to go to that cold satellite
or any other place where no one will beat him even though they still may walk on him.

The Old House

I keep making wrong turns,
my mind distracted at the wheel,
until I find I'm on the old route
that lead me back to where I grew.
The way is so familiar.
I could do it in my sleep.

There's no one there to see anymore.
Mom and Dad are dead, and
all the kids have moved away.
Me and my siblings now
all live in different states.
With no place that calls all our names.

Since I'm in the neighborhood
I figure I'll drive by and take a look.
I see the new owners have
put in a new driveway,
and the siding looks too shiny
to be what was there last time.

The big oak tree's been taken down
and the swing set is no more.
I'd like to take a look inside,
but am not brave enough
to knock on the front door.

This place was once called home,
but I can't call it that now.
My home is where my kids are
and that's a bit ways off.
I should leave before it gets too late.

I don' know why I stopped,
they'll be wondering where I've been.
I start to pull away and
hear a woman say my name,
but it's someone else mom
yelling for a kid who sounds the same.

So off I go no good-bye or hello,
just steel and wheels lost on the road
wondering where all the ghosts have gone
and if they'll ever know
that I came by to say so long
to what was so long ago.

Michael Ceraolo

Excerpts from my work-in-progress Euclid Creek Book Three

The creek,
and the lake it empties into,
were both created by the retreat of the glaciers
more than ten thousand years ago
No humans were here to see it,
nor
to hear the loud noise of the ice moving,
nor
to feel what amounted to earthquakes
as the great weight of the glaciers
lifted itself off,
allowing
the land to spring back into place

Today
there is a part of the lakefront state park
and a branch of the public library
(housed in a former all-girls' high school)
on the west side of the creek,
where
a forest soon moved in
after the retreat of the ice,
and,
after the most recent settlement,
a shipyard on that same west side,
the first manufacturing in the watershed,
one of the earliest in the whole area

Captain William Treat
(sometimes inexplicably called William Trist
by some sources),
Charles Moss,
and Ruel House
(and
the always-anonymous actual workers)
started their business in 1838

by cutting down some of the forest
and shipping the timbers elsewhere,
there

to be assembled into a ship,
which
inspired them to build ships themselves,
starting

with canal boats,
of which
they built up to a dozen before
moving on to build larger craft

A list of those larger ships:

Roanoke (1843)

a wood two-masted schooner

92' x 23' x 8'

(lost in Lake Huron October 27, 1866);

The Empire (circa 1844)

no physical details available

no disposition available;

General Taylor (1847)

again,

nothing else known;

General Worth

launched April 17, 1848

as a brig,

118' x 25' 10',

later

modified into a schooner and renamed

(lost in Lake Michigan September 10, 1895);

L.C. Butts (1850)

a wood two-masted schooner

91' x 23' x 9'

(lost on Lake Huron May 15, 1866)

Or

they may be awaiting excavation
from some dusty archive

(or

its twenty-first century equivalent)

Either way,

the known and unknown here
are both deserving of remembrance

Both people and governments
can,
and do,
genuflect
before those they deem worthy,
and
when doing so often times
show no hesitation whatsoever
about disrupting the daily live
of those not inclined to worship
the objects of their devotion,
and
such disruption has been going on
for a long time

Genuflection Now (2013)

Roads closed
Sidewalks shut down,
and
low-level functionaries with walkie-talkies
empowered with reflected glory
force those of us in flyover country
to walk way out of our way
(though
no film may actually be shot
during the time of our walk)
so the closed streets and sidewalks
can be used,
along with
computer graphics to be added later,
to create the illusion of a city
not our hometown,
though
our hometown has given the millionaires
millions in legalized bribery
(euphemistically called tax breaks,
which
they were only too happy to accept)
to film their movie here
And
not only does no one protest,

most
willingly put up with the disruption,
and
hundreds patiently wait behind the barricades
and thousands more look out their windows,
hoping to catch a glimpse of their idols,
or
at least a glimpse of the stunt doubles

Genuflection Then (1875-1905)

Euclid Avenue closed
between East Ninth and East Fortieth Streets
(then known as Erie and Case, respectively)
on Wednesday,
Thursday,
Friday,
and Saturday

afternoons in a six-week period
in November and December
Sidewalks open
so that thousands could gather to watch
sleigh races between the many
malefactors of great wealth
who lived on the street then known
as Millionaires' Row
(That there should be such a place in the city
was to be expected:

in 1885
half of the world's millionaires
lived in Cleveland,
and
most of the mansions they had built
commanded an excellent view of the lake;
that no one minded the disruption
caused by the races seems less likely)

And
the tax breaks provided during
the entire period of the sleigh races
(the races,
presumably,

were dependent on there being snow,
something beyond even the control of these men)
took the most extreme for possible:
there being no income tax

July 31, 1818

A Friday

Andrew Logan,

a transplanted Pennsylvanian,

published the city's first newspaper,

the Cleaveland Gazette & Commercial Register

(note the correct spelling of the town's name:

folklore states that a later typesetter

dropped the first a for space reasons,

and

the town fathers went along with it)

The paper rolled off the press

at a one-storey cabin

at 220 Superior NW,

where,

within sight of the lake,

it mentioned

"The Lake Serpent" thirty-two feet long

Reportedly,

Mr. Logan meant the serpent

as an allegory of the National Bank,

which he opposed

But perhaps

Mr. Logan was at least partially inspired

by three reported sightings of the serpent

during 1817,

the serpent usually described

as thirty to forty feet long;

those weren't the first sightings

The first reported sighting was in 1793

There were a couple of reported sightings

during the decade of the 1890s

There were reported sightings periodically

throughout the twentieth century

The last reported sighting was in 2004

Is there such a creature,

and,

if so,

why haven't scientists found it yet?

I don't know the answer to that,

but

I do know that,

worldwide,

new species are found on a regular basis

And

I also know that the Loch Ness Monster

has been sought for far longer and not yet found,

and

that Lake Erie is four hundred fifty times

larger than Loch Ness

John Kaniecki

You Saw the Ocean (Dedicated to Derek Walcott)

You saw the ocean
Blue, green, white capped waves in motion
You learned stories of the educated
Sons of the slave masters you hated
I have walked barefoot upon Caribbean hot white sands
I have talked to the people of your islands
I know their names and have heard their story
We shared our Love with all our glory

Also I am intimate with your time
Where you choose free verse over rhyme
An endless war raged in futility
Your own kinsmen struggled to rise from humility
Crucifying every human emotion
You saw the ocean

Where was your cry for justice?
Passionate pleas persuading righteousness
Instead in an alabaster tower
You gazed out the window hour after hour
Life roared crashing on the beach loud as thunder
For you not to hear the oppressed, how I wonder?
A pretty, nice, sentimental notion
You saw the ocean

Lines

Lines
Of various nature
Straight
Defines conquest and hate
Precise
Longitude and latitude
Is rude and obscene
Do you really mean
That a country will end
Based on a line we pretend
And insist
That it does exist
Birds over these barriers fly
Animals carelessly walk by
Yet for these lines
Men will kill and die
In war and more

An Atlas
It is nice in class
But in reality
These lines suggest
We have failed the test

I am sure
That for mankind to progress to peace
These lines must cease

A Poet Named God

I long for summer
When days are long and skies clear
When nature is exalted in wonder
And abundant life does appear
Flowers grand
Help us understand
Creation is by God's hand
His art touches our heart

Poets though
Think they know
More than common folk
Using language absurd
Never used
The rhyme heard
Is confused
And we don't get the joke

God is the poet supreme
Creating reality and every dream
His language is simple and plain
And does refrain
From complexities vain
Poets however
Seek to be clever
And the beauty they wish to achieve
We never receive.

Machu Pico

A city known
Massive stone upon stone
Buildings high
They testify
They cry
And defy
The theory
Of European superiority

To the mountain ascend
A city in the blue sky
Expired to die
Good news my friend
We built the before
We'll build them once more
Of that I'm sure

Jill Rachel Jacobs

The Naked Truth

I'm naked! Can't you see?

Naked as a jaybird,
naked,
exposed,
reporting for duty.
Naked as I came,
naked as I will go.

*No! You're wearing your
navy pants and blue-striped shirt.
Can't you see?*

But it's too late.
Dementia's in the house.
chewed up,
swallowed up,
spit out whole,
without warning,
or trace of resemblance,
to Harry and Adele's
second oldest daughter,
bride of Jerome,
The woman who climbed
a mountain and back,
with six children in tow.

*degenerative,
delusional,
demented.*
Case closed.

An insidious conundrum,
a malicious malady,
a vicious viper,
burrowing far beneath,
leaving a trail of shattered dreams
and devastation,

While the walking wounded
search for higher ground.

*Who are you?
Why are you here?
Where is my daughter!
And scene.*

Disrobed, divested,
bald and bare,
Raw and exposed,
she dances in the air.

*Will they know me when I come,
naked and splendid in all my glory?
I will dance on wings of light,
and carry your heart in mine forever.*

*Will my people be there for me,
as I will be there for you?*

*Even as my candle grows dim,
my eternal flame will grow stronger,
magnetic and fierce,
as constant as the Northern Star.*

Unyielding, infinite,
incomparable,
A mother's love,
burns unrelentingly,
Long after this earthly light is extinguished-
Even after I die a thousand and one deaths,
It will shine on.

Yet, as this insufferable silence grows louder,
I still wonder:
*Will anyone ever love me the way she did-
As she lay naked,
exposed, in repose,
Waiting to go home?*

?

There is always a question,
whose answer will remain unclear,
until it's clear. (*Like, duh?*)

Because since you've returned,
There's been this ginormous elephant,
planted right smack
in the middle of the room.

(*Oh come on, you see it, don't you?*)

Rearing its ugly head here and there,

Yet, always resigning itself
to its respective corner,

Patiently awaiting its turn.

No! I'm not calling your wife an elephant!

Don't be ridiculous.

(*Although she could very well be the size of an elephant—*

How would I know?)

No, I don't want to see her picture!

I would prefer to pretend that she does not exist.

(*That's been working fine 'til now, don't you think?*)

No! I'm not calling her a fat, pig!

(*That's actually redundant, by the way.*)

Come to think of it,

I really like pigs.

They're a really sweet animal
who is often misunderstood and maligned.

Perhaps you've misunderstood me, too.

I'm sure your girl is lovely.

***You must bring her for a drink
when you come sometime!*** (*Hubbell*).

My First One and Only

I don't like the rollercoaster.
I never know what to expect.
Also, I don't trust the people hired to run the rides.
Instead of screaming in excitement,
I yell in terror,
spending most of my time wondering,
where the ride operators got their training,
Or even worse,
if they received any training at all.

I like the merry-go-round;
with the flying, faux colorful horses,
dancing,
swirling,
in an ethereal, equestrian ballet,
and the corny circus music,
playing on an interminable musical loop.
If I fall, I probably won't get hurt,
since it's not too far to the ground.

I don't want to fall again,
But if I do,
would you catch me this time?
Will you take me somewhere
I've never been,
At least not since I was last with you?

Or take me to that place
that only we know;
Timeless, ageless,
and fearless;
Where we are old,
and we are new,
and we are wise,
and just born.

Far from here,
basking in warmth and tranquility,
drifting endlessly,
in aqua-blue Aegean seas,
There are no sad stories today.
And the only thing I hear
beside the sound of trickling, melodious water,
Is a voice that feels like home.

My first, my last,
my love,
Has brought me here again.
Melding into the ocean,
I hear you calling my name.
Without your voice,
I'm stuck on the rollercoaster.
It's terrifying.

Hydra and the Jellyfish

Surrendering deep into your eyes,
But you are not there.
Tethered to unseen images,
Photos,
cloudy and obscure,
emerge in a darkroom far from here.

“Will we meet again?”
He asks once more,
On this earthly place,
Full of new moons,
hot licks.

Permeated by a disquieting indignation,
She sees him as he is today;
Making his daily trek
toward comfortable oblivion,
Down the winding, snaky road,
The path that nearly took him away for good,
though he’s still light years from her.

Ticking and tocking,
his mind wanders,
as he wonders,
“What color are her eyes?”
Though his words quickly vanish
into a speck of dust of yesteryear;
long before time turned itself around again.

Enveloped by Hydra’s aqua warm waters,
blissfully unaware of Cronos' suffocating tentacles,
A wiser man would have taken cover,
at the sight of the morning’s first light,
as it teased and taunted upon the window shade.

But these days are much clearer.
Not like yesterday,
when drowning in murky,
fathomless oceans,
stung by Medusa’s fatal blow,
I just resigned.

Now you are everywhere;
In taxis,

reflections of store windows,
in crocuses and ice storms,
and children's eyes,
innocent and clear.

I see your eyes, everywhere.
Haunting me.

GARY LANGFORD

Michelangelo's Creek

You wouldn't expect Michelangelo (1475-1564) to appear in the outback, Australia, but he does in the form of a creek that last had water about the time the Sistene Chapel was painted into art history. The creek was lonely, needing someone to talk to, notably a writer who didn't have to be persuaded that creeks talk. In the outback creeks can be as strange as a random thought, especially when you don't know you're walking along one.

Firstly, the bed was a shallow barrel-vault, around 118 feet by 45 feet, and this alone showed its history. Water once flowed like a window, alternate lunettes and spandrels glittering on the surface, dreaming to show us all what it's made of, along with an influence on the Sistene Chapel. Initially, I shook my head in bewilderment at this idea which was worse than some of my own.

Secondly, it was during one of the worst heat waves in the outback that the remnants of the creek bed drew itself up to try to talk to us all, even if I ended up the only one to listen. Somehow the creek knew that I admired Michelangelo for being on his back as an artist for so long he became a sculpture, which I'd buy if I could, though I've never had that sort of money. A million thoughts are not a million dollars.

In the early century of Michelangelo's Creek nude youths swam in corner pools, near gum trees for shade, though skins darkened in agreement with the great eyes of the chapel, which couldn't help noticing them, commenting without judgment (that would come), 'there is a purity of evolution here.' The creek chuckled before continuing. 'What was said was 'revolution' but it was another day when heat altered every spoken word.'

Temporarily, the bed whirled into the air before becoming a combustible gas, so uncertain it was going anywhere that what you noticed disappeared. There was nothing Michelangelo could do about this. Fortunately, the creek had had a bright idea, leading to *The Last Judgment*, unveiled from the shadows into a pool of unrequited light, 29 October, 1545, twenty-one years to the day the Sistene Chapel started as an artwork, though to me Michelangelo's major achievement was in the 1508-1512 period when he lay completely on his back, painting the ceiling without falling off the scaffolding, or developing severe spinal problems.

He was that close to a revelation.

What an artist. What a back. Or have you read that he had back problems due to the Sistene Chapel where a crick became a toll? 'How did he do it without glasses, paint dripping down?' I asked the question in a school classroom when I was a kid, where the teacher looked furious as I was meant to be studying science. 'Da Vinci,' I added. '1452-1519, he was an early modern scientist, inventing an aircraft, unknown to everybody for years, not just an artist, an el supremo of mind, matter and anything else you can throw in.' The teacher sent me outside the laboratory to cane me in enjoyment, mumbling disdainfully as he wielded the willow. 'Little dick, you're

doing the wrong subject.' He was right. I took the hint and headed for the Arts room where both Michelangelo and da Vinci were cheap posters on the wall, scowling down at me.

Now, years later, I was on the creek front, learning another form of early history and the coming of Christ that Michelangelo painted in the chapel that took a fair chunk of his adult life. As for my point about the amazing story of painting for so long on your back, imagine that's almost as long as we spend asleep in a decade?

Michelangelo's Creek never had any fish. The small skeletons found by anthropologists on the creek bed were animals that gave up living in the madness of walking or flying to a creek for water, only to discover it was a rumour and was never there in their lifetimes. 'You have to tell the story,' said the creek to me in the heat wave. 'Otherwise we'll never be believed and I just can't stand that.' I nodded to relax the creek. 'You're clever. I don't think you were ever called Michelangelo, other than now because that's what's in my head.' I was wondering if I might float away as gas, not the creek in its long bed of time. 'If you do, water will return,' whispered the creek. I blinked in surprise and that was all as waves of heat lay ahead of me and I had to walk my way through them to get to my own story.

One day in the fall of the seasons, then, I remembered all that the creek had told me. My one return to the area found pure emptiness. Not even a skeleton lay in sight, let alone a thought.

All this caused me to hide Michelangelo's Creek in a book with a small print run, just as the Italian artist never understood the importance of the outback creek in the Sistene Chapel as he frowned and persisted over his grand artwork, surprising himself at how strong his skeleton was proving to be, regardless of paint dripping on to his body until a small pool was formed on the floor. In the outback his own creek was envious, murmuring, 'bloody Michelangelo.'

Memory

Tidal memory goes in and out over the bar.
A gentle sound lies in the sighing pool.
There are rough figures, rocky remains of truth.
We try to pick the one that is ours.
This was given to us in weather's fall.
We hear a croon of the conductor's call.

Storm. Memories fondly hold on to us.
Turmoil rolls across the land.
There are bunkers in forgetful bedrooms.
Fine weather. Suspicion grows with age.
It cannot be this good for this long.
We drag the cherished moment along.

Sultry comes down the street of brightness.
We wake as cheerful as a garden hose,
raining on ourselves in a crude charity.
The drowning hour takes us out to sea,
beyond the headlands and the sights we know.
Even the optimist gives us little hope.

You are falsely termed, I announce,
trying to sound prophetic.
Your reply is simple, pathetic.
You grow overnight - this is war -
as a person you do not wish to be.
I sympathise but announce, no other way.

You try to avoid the love traps of the hotel bar.
You feel lost in your unfamiliar body.
A cautionary surges in from the deep sea.
Hours are waves. There is no method where
these can be called ours. The act is perchance,
a knobbly current; we call or fall.

Frost holds the clock; deserted factories;
graffiti announces nothing. Walls encompass all.
The river's mouth is still, saltine and silent.
We call to dreamily float back in.
We have gone beyond the current of the past.
The land that is ours has gone.

I am your witness. I am your emperor.
I have to be bold, knowing you will cut sentiment

in half, classifying me as an occasional friend.
We all do this, regardless of the end.
Each of us would like to write this out.
Each of us swears without doubt in memory.

Pickpocket Girl

Her skin is dressed in parchment, avoiding school.
She was born to pick pockets, as clean as a conscience.
She is expelled, stealing books - and selling them back to teachers.
Parents predict prison will be her future. They should know.
Her final school report, *hopeless, hopeless*.
It is the only week she spent at school this year.
An old man - anything over twenty - nods wistfully.
His wallet slides gently into her hands without a goodbye.
Her honesty is casting cards and a driver's licence into a waste bin,
glancing at a scowling man, accusing her under half-eaten food.

Music notes: a collection of one hundred dollar bills.
She shouts two other girls in school military uniform.
One has a socket hole. One has a coal mine in her hat.
'Dad hits me as a thought, mum is a piss-head.'
Lies and truth sit comfortably on her landscape.
Parents cheerfully lower their flag of blame.
A joke of the streets goes, lose your brain and you'll die,
avoid losing it and you will anyway. Her parents are on welfare.
She spends more than they earn in a single day of the wallet,
floating under a money cloud in the school of hard knocks.

Her mother tries to sell her in summer. 'You're like me,
I sold myself at your age, and look at me now, on top.'
Her mother's foot quivers, she pours another long one,
raising her glass to drink to the soft essence of sentiment.
Pickpocket girl is caught in a sushi bar, littered with tiny bodies.
Ann Potter is fifteen: a children's court, community service.
She enrolls in further education, surprising herself in clouds.
There is no martyrdom on a new land, beyond the crooked way.
She hopes she is listening to a sanctioning sound,
in the attempt to cast herself from the whirl of pickpocket girl.

Conversation with our enemy

Our enemy is the size of a high-rise building.
Teeth are as sharp as swords, able to cut through bodies like air.
Nails are delicate bullets. The hiss is background music.
Would I lie to you? Would Dawn give birth to Joy?
I should know, Joy is my cousin on my mother's side.
The enemy's accusation is I am a liar, a know-all-dick.
I try not to say it's Richard. Would it help if Joy gave birth
to a town of know-alls who grew to become know-nots?
Reason hitch-hikes across the country, dressed to please.
We are easily blinded, refusing to offer a lift,
worried we will be beaten up, or sued for originality.
Lawyers are on the market as much as shares and cafes.
Barristers court us to empty our bank accounts.
Wigs and gowns turn us around. We cannot argue.
We know a foreign language will meet us.

I give this line to our enemy like a golden nugget.
You don't have to be grateful, sending me what I've always wanted.
Just avoid a debt I can never repay.
Just avoid turning me into flames without a memory.
You enjoy being a sculpture in a temperate cloud.
Women become erstwhile mountains of oxygen.
Men mature to be ranges of nitrogen.
Children are released in the combustible world of hydrogen.
Our relatives - distant of course - gas themselves in offices.
Each one gets up in the mourning as frowning wreckage.
Families aren't doing too well, hiding behind barbecues.
Nobody is certain about trusting the butcher anymore.
Beef could be your cousin. Pork could be your portly aunt.
We worry fish schools are caught in petroleum oil.
We relax - temporarily - with glasses of Elephant Bill.

Our hangover is heavy. The entire room is swimming.
Groans are like a cheerful orchestra to our enemy.
We get up in a new shape, bacon scarred, onion designed.
Make-up is needed for our role, no audition, no applause.
The mirror says the character cannot be us.
Too much glitter and glamour without a movie to come.
My ego flies into space where casting will be our choice.
My role is to play a young boy with real balls.
Mine cannot be kicked so the enemy holds the kick back.
The script is ironic. *You've lost that loving feeling.*
I worsen in the plot of my unfamiliar body parts.
I am stitched up neatly so there is a good side.

We keep quiet along the fault-line. No earthquake, thank you.
Individuals are left hanging on the line like clothing,
sodden by bird-shit, cleaned by rain, to reign true.

Our preposterous enemy never ages. And don't we know it.
We do, calling this a dictatorship, though we mumble
in case we are heard, judged and put out to fry.
One thing we know is who owns all the abattoirs.
Animals are cattle thighs, dancing sheep, talking goats.
We try not to be fooled, to be childish, but we are.
There is no cheerful breeze of grateful solution.
Ring persecutors. Pretend you are the enemy of darkness.
Here, fear is an army that gets us all down in the end.
Guffaws mean we are being listened to rather fondly.
Our church is our body. Faith is the covenant of blood.
Only now do we find the final call of the enemy.
Knowledge has an unexpected price: to matter
is impossible in the gas of universal tatters.
We are pressed rather kindly to all scatter.

Mark Young

The Lesser Horseshoe Bat

Give me a tree,
said The Pope,
& by using my
Magic Wand I
can make you
your own bi-
sexual. & since
pole vaulting is
a little more tricky
than flying, I also
have a refrigerator
& a double wall
oven so can make
you both a toasted
cheese sandwich
when you drop
in to see me in
the Vatican night.

A line from Franklin Pierce

The word 'agile' has been
subverted since a time lapse
photography experiment
using a most comprehensive

selection of pet friendly, hot
tub, fire pit, shuttle on demand,
UK post-punk bands filled
Home Depot with a lot of crazies.

These weren't your usual
groupies wearing earrings
made of varnished moose
turd. Rather a concentration

of popular applications from
Adobe—hypoparathyroidism,
congenital heart disease, athymia—
which leverage consumer data to

drive personalized cross-channel
marketing programs & satirically
challenge the art world by disen-
gaging with the effects of terrain.

A stair case

Someone has
stolen my feet &
put balloons in
their place. "His feet
seemed not to touch
the floor" is no
longer concept
but reality. I am

disconsolate. Now
Ginger Rogers has
left me for another
man. I remain
heels over head
in love with her.

A line from Dwight D. Eisenhower

I'm mean with money,
use my luxu-barge only
at weekends, have sent
many families from south-

east Ohio into orbit on
commercial satellites
to fill a known gap in
the drug administration

market. It's like an amuse-
ment park ride for them.
For me, it helps with the
out-of-pocket expenses

incurred from an ongoing
project to delineate those
places & artifacts mentioned
by Herodotus. All I have to

do is confirm some personal
details & use oil-free hummus.
The world moves. What
rhymes with terpsichore?

Rental bikes & loose stools

Buy a mattress stuffed with coconut fiber & kapok. Visualize a mannequin. It's exhausting posing in a store window while shoppers gawk at you. Buy me food & tell me I'm pretty. Go

geometric with stripes & angles colliding. We call it the cell phone effect. Buy a product that is perfect for my diet goals. Please do not judge me for throwing up in the men's restroom

located at Gongbei Port. Buy me a store in the charming Star Street neighborhood. It's a great location, with a team of cake artists right outside. What else would you like to put on the map?

Edna St. Vincent Millay rewrites her Suicide

Thus passion, fashioned with thy lash
& thy blows, hast flown away, I know
Not where. I have been starved in thy
Hands, mocked, met & glutted by
Thy sneers, beat sore—I live with
Deprecations! Curse thee † will again,
Again. Desires bent, spent, crawled away.
My body eaten, heated with tardy tears.
Kindness ceased. My thought ran
Sparingly, aye, from thy kissed crust. I
Might avail me of thy fires no more! & all
For a pledge, as if threat were a holiday!
Now, thee with me, I go not as I came.
I brought that old grace. Now fear & faith

Alike beat me, eat me whence I go—that
Was not pledged by thou but that I know.

I spake again. "Is mine to bear." Ah,
But through my brain—no trace
Of life nor easy vow. Lonely I came,
& I depart alone, Life canst not follow.

Post Scriptum

RD Larson

Alone

Sunlight shafts my heart
while darkness lingers
and danger walks.
I say I bleed but
You can't know.
Sunlight hides my pain
while cold fingers
and danger calls.
I say I die but
You can't hear.
Fear rides the sun
Across the sky
and danger waits.
I say I know but
You can't tell.
Darkness swallows me
while sunlight fades
and danger slips
in beside me but
You can't feel.
Nighttime slices my soul
while darkness stays
and danger calls.
I say wake me but
You only sleep.
Following bungee jumping, maybe re-embodiment.
(See enclosed).

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