

# *Ygdrasil*

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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.

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# 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)

*George Worthington* (1853)  
a wood schooner-barge 120' long  
(lost on Lake Erie July 22, 1877);

*William H. Dewitt* (1853)  
(lost to history);

*N.M. Standart* (April 1854)  
built as a brig,  
later  
modified to a schooner-barge  
138' x 30' x 12'  
(lost November 18, 1880  
in Lake Erie east of Fairport);

*William Trent* (August 1856)  
built as a brig,  
later  
modified to a schooner-barge  
146' x 35' x 11'  
(lost in Lake Huron October 3, 1883);

*Valeria* (1857)  
(no other info);

*Colonel Ellsworth* (1861)  
built as a bark,  
later  
modified to a schooner  
138' x 26' x 12'  
(lost in Lake Michigan September 2, 1896);

*North Star*  
(built by a different captain  
no other data known)

The name of the company isn't known;  
there are no pictures of any of the ships,  
both having vanished,  
along  
with all the other missing info,  
into the myth-mists of history

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