

# Yggdrasil

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# Introduction

## Brian Knowles

### ***Cannon Fodder***

he said he was born on a filleting table  
said he was born with a tail  
said he can remember the first sting of air  
on his baby white scalp  
can remember the sweat on his mother's chest

he claimed to have been educated in empty lots  
by dandelions, scrap wood, and ashes  
from fires the older kids set  
stood around  
and left

claimed his shadow self was a giggling, orange, cartoon devil  
with a 1920's hair cut  
said he tackled him in a dream  
his first and only fight

he described his occupation as cannon fodder

said the hippies went to the wax museum  
but the squares stayed in the cupboard  
and kept their ancient routine

# Brian Knowles

## *Neighbourhood*

We can't  
pull our daughters  
behind us  
in a sleigh  
on winter nights  
through the neighbourhood  
because I was mugged,  
because you've caught men  
looking at you  
in our windows  
after I've gone,

because the tall man up the street  
walks discreet deliveries to the motels  
several times a day,  
and because the thin woman up the street  
does too,

because fire trucks coming to pick up needles  
excite our daughters,  
and the firefighters  
give them stickers,

and our girls know what to do if they find a needle,  
but they've yet to ask  
what the needles  
are for.

I assume they think a nurse  
drops them  
accidentally.

## ***Hanging from Hooks***

we hang from hooks  
like holly in November

we snag split fingernails  
on sweater sleeves  
and nothing leaves us warm  
without an itch

I had ideas - honest  
they hung above the city  
but trembled terribly  
and bent like sick fish

now the voice recorder  
only plays back  
snickers and hiss

### ***With Swollen Knuckles***

With swollen knuckles,  
with an old world muscle memory,  
she made a recipe box  
from a coffee can she  
unearthed in the garden.

"Nothing this old  
will stand aside  
and abide the unimaginative."

The tin had housed ants,  
spiders, oyster mushrooms,  
and now, batter stained index cards  
dotted in tallow,  
transversed by her handwritten scrawl,  
yellowing year by year.

Her stove warmed the house.  
Steam condensed on the windows,  
beaded and descended  
the minor curves of  
hundred year old glass.

Bones let go their secrets  
in her stockpot.  
Roots stained her countertop.  
Broth solidified  
in wafer thin china.

"You die, I eat, I die, you eat,"  
she'd mutter over the stove,  
in the garden,  
through the woods.

Her house was built on a foundation of fieldstone.  
"The glaciers brought these stones.  
The rest of the house came on a train."

The trains brought the people  
who broke the land,  
who built the towns,  
fenced the reserves,  
paved main street,

who left on the trains for the city,  
left main street boarded up,  
ground cover cracking through cement  
trying to heal the place.

The bar is still open,  
the post office too.

### ***Everything in Moderation***

and the deserving dance a waltz  
and their posture is perfect

and the ladies wear long gloves  
to touch  
but not touch

and the less so watch  
with the oil paintings  
of grinning fishmongers  
and farmers  
hung on the walls

and it's all very pleasing  
and for the deserving  
it's cream

and the men hide  
behind manners  
but pick off young ladies  
sequentially

and the less so believe  
better blessings will fall  
and so continue to watch  
with the smiling portraits  
gilded in gold  
nailed to the wall

everything in moderation  
just make sure it's everything

# Tim Gavin

## **SOME WILD**

Daphne looks at the moon, which melts  
Beyond the mango tree – the lone tree  
In the center of a grove that everyone too early  
Has picked clean, leaving it for dead; she knows  
How the night sky bruises the lunar light  
And feels in the rhythm of her breath  
The fear of a hand slap or dirty look. Violence  
Is all around, pouring into Port-Au-Prince  
Like imported rice, just making the peasants  
More poor. The moon now hides behind clouds  
Steaming east to west and thunder  
Interrupts night sleep and babies cry  
At the plunder and spoil caused by another  
President turned dictator. Daphne knows the sun  
Will come one morning and wake her  
From the shrill cries of another nasty dream  
In which she runs from the arms of her father  
Into the embrace of some other wild devil.

## TASTE OF SALT

So for a taste of salt Zedek would walk 50 kilometers,  
Ignoring reckless taptaps and fresco vendors  
And egg handlers. He would walk in rhythm  
To the truck horns' blare avoiding grape-vining motorcycles,  
Realizing that nobody is calling his name  
Or requesting his help as he weaves  
Through the bodies crowding the market  
In Mirebalais. He feels the salt in the air,  
And that's all he desires. As it  
Creates a membrane over his skin,  
He dreams of a hard boiled egg  
White and smooth with a dash of salt  
Sprinkled over it, longing to sink  
His teeth into the tender yellow yoke  
Just for once the taste of salt.

## **DIRT**

The moon is rotting in the limbs of the banana tree  
And Daphne howls into the night, which covers the deep  
Bruise of her soul as she wrings her hands in the dirty bucket  
To wash herself from the dirt of the day and the dirt of her lover  
And the dirt of the horse she walked behind, coming up  
The mountain from the market and the dirt of her children  
Who suck her milk till it's gone and the dirt of the foreign  
Missionaries who believe because they say Jesus as Jezi,  
then they are somehow soul mates to Daphne and her kin.  
She lifts the rag to the sky and sees the many holes which have  
Filtered the dirt from her body to the air and into the river  
Of her mother country where one mountain  
Rises up after another ranging into infinity.

## NO GOOD

Daphne and Zedek so amped and soul scrubbed  
Drift satellite-like toward swirling stars  
Of orgasmic dreams and weightlessness,  
Segueing to rolling lights – blue and tonic and so  
Far away. They could've been true loves if not for his  
Brother-in-law, the priest of voodoo haunts  
And laughs – long prayers murmuring a string  
Of ancestors past and present, forbidding Daphne.

They're stranded on both sides of this earth –  
White stone tilts to the dying sun with the base holding lime  
Stone so as to not let the dead awake but their  
Stolen kisses fall foul and to the floor –  
Zedek left Daphne in the slabs of light –  
A dirty rag discarded and licked for no good.

## **SHE WAS SWEEPING**

She was sweeping dust from the center of the village  
To prepare for Eucharist as if searching a lost coin.  
She desired a moment before the folks came from their huts  
And gathered around her to ask about the bell  
Ringing and the priest vesting and asking  
*Who's the blan with Mon Pere?*  
She shrugs and sweeps as if her hands were frozen  
As if she had fallen down  
and stood back up  
As if she had entered helpless mode  
And walked beyond the vibration  
Of coins hitting the ground  
And rolling into oblivion  
Of the bell ringing in ordinary time  
As she swept dust, searching the missing host.

# Felino A. Soriano

from *Forms, migrating*

## Active actions

Ornate  
these movements contemplating self  
in the wooden mirror and splayed shadow homes  
portraying lyric as diversity's out-of-tune tonal  
configuration.

Watch, lean. Themes' velocity

middle bridge function:                      feet, flame      flee  
into spatial freedom  
conditional seconds in the  
life of meaning, now.

And with optimism  
with transparency  
bodies become a solid oscillation, tangling in the mode to untangle  
or/  
when needing rest to  
reactivate speech in the marrow,  
function  
interior to the gale of the body's excessive persuading, obsessive  
cleansing.

## **Heard advice**

bursts confirm language

praise, then affirmations

purpose, react then affiliate reason

ornate emblems, draw contours to recognize the body's continual evaporation

## **Bass / piano configuration**

rest isn't fulcrum of moving  
through hands and their  
gathering inclinations—

why fathom portions or  
the fraction of the sedentary style—

vibratory  
open waters

glass formulation  
wings' strum avalanche  
into landing's soft intuition

and through imperative of listening  
devotion unwinds into rest and  
hearing writes into where desire  
rotates against conversation's  
longest route, applying echoes  
into lasting language, recorded  
and stranded until the body  
confirms its readying open  
hands

## **Piano contemplation**

gained the momentum  
engrained the rising position to  
provide space and the rhythm of

needed selected odes to

combine philosophy and  
improvised duration      distinguishing optimism  
within last dance sobriety

these fingers feel for directional design

flail from impoverished molds of doing without accelerated meaning

## **Days extracting sequential moments**

Collide. To what, examines toward goal the hours  
rotate upon specified occurrences. Behavior. Burning  
language resides as embers on foreheads, on resuscitated  
wounds now resembling smooth of the raised and acclimated  
scar. Behavior. How to bend and not break is philosophy  
of intertwining deciphered misunderstandings.

# Amanda Aizpuriete

*translated by Inara Cedrins*

\* \* \*

In the sea of the night sky  
the trail of a comet  
like a mermaid.  
Exploding aircraft  
shakes silver scales  
over your skin.  
(If someone lay beside you  
they'd ask in fright:  
didn't you know  
that the wings of moths  
harbor syphilis?)  
How many nights now  
you address yourself  
as though a separate person.  
How many days now  
you refuse to talk to others –  
as if they were you.  
Silver scales grow into the skin.  
You awaken already a mermaid.

\* \* \*

naktsdebess jūrā  
komēta novilnī asti  
kā nāra.  
uzspridzinātā lidmašīna  
nokaisa sudraba zvīņas pār tavu miesu.  
(ja tev kāds gulētu blakus,  
tas tagad izbijies vaicātu:  
vai tad tu nezināji, ka naktstauriņiem zem spārniem  
ligzdo sifiliss?)  
jau kuro nakti no vietas  
tu uzrunā sevi ar „tu” –  
it kā tu būtu kāds cits.

jau kuro dienu no vietas  
tu atsakies runāt ar citiem –  
it kā tie būtu tu.  
sudraba zvīņas ieaug miesā.  
tu atmodīsies jau nāra.

## Two Lullabies

\*

barefoot beggar in the capital city's winter,  
streetwalker in golden shoes on tablecloths and mugs,  
under the soldier moon tired heroes  
travel and travel,  
but you, my child, close your eyes.  
dragons are asleep in their dens,  
sirens snooze on their cliff island,  
all tales have reached their end.

\*

sleep, my child, sleep.  
dragons smile in their dreams in smeared dens,  
sirens snooze on the cliff island,  
subconscious fallen asleep.

sleep: when you wake,  
the world will be different,  
sirens with their tongues torn out will sing in the coffin.  
dragons, sparking gloomily, will take their leave.

## DIVAS ŠŪPUĻDZIESMAS

...

basām kājām ubadze pa lielpilsētas ziemu,  
zelta korpēs ielene pa galdautiem un ģīmjiem,  
zem karavīru mēness varoņi noguruši  
iet un iet,  
bet tu, manu bērniņ, taisi acis ciet.  
pūķi aizmiguši alās,  
sirēnas snauž klinšu salā,  
visas pasakas ir galā.

...

dusi, manu bērniņ, dusi.  
pūķi sapņos smaida piekvēpušās alās,  
sirēnas snauž klinšu salā,  
zemapziņa aizmigusi.

dusi. kad tu pamodīsies,  
pasaule būs savādāka,  
sirēnas ar mēlēm izrautām dziedās zārkā.  
pūķi, skumji dzirksteļojot, atvadīsies.

\* \* \*

now I am in my father's dream.  
twilight like a well trained geisha  
pours jasmine tea into cups.  
on the table between us three-cornered notes from the front,  
that father wouldn't let anyone read,  
and a photo of some fierce polish woman's beautiful face.  
her eyes are full of parting,  
her greatcoat on my shoulders.  
fabric trenchant not of war, but of the scent of jasmine  
and that doesn't seem strange at all.  
maybe I am now in my father's death.

\* \* \*

tagad esmu sava tēva sapnī.  
krēsla kā labi dresēta geiša  
tasēs lej jasmīnu tēju.  
uz galda starp mums frontes vēstuļu trijstūri,  
kurus tēvs nevienam nedevis lasīt,  
un foto ar kādas polietes plēsīgi skaisto seju.  
viņas acis ir pilnas ar šķiršanos,  
viņas šinelis man uz pleciem.  
vadmala asā nevis pēc kara, bet jasmīniem smaržo  
un tas nemaz neliekas savādi.  
varbūt es tagad esmu sava tēva nāvē.

\* \* \*

the last compliments spark like champagne bubbles.  
from now on there'll be no one who wearily tries  
to enthuse about sunny eyes and the sinuous honey of hair.  
no one, unburied.

maybe let the flat champagne turn to vinegar?  
the sweet season has ended. now come the rains of autumn.  
the last words of flattery flash among clouds  
the fallen rosy apple chewed by a contented cow.

. \* \* \*

kā šampja burbuļi glāzē dzirkst pēdējie komplimenti.  
turpmāk vairs nebūs neviena, kurš gurdeni censtos  
jūsmot par saulainām acīm un matu stiegraino medu.  
vairs neviena, kurš neapbedīts.

varbūt etiķi pārraudzēt novadējušos šampanieti?  
saldā sezona beigusies. tagad nāks rudens lieti.  
pēdējie glaimu vārdi starp mākoņiem atzaigo.  
kritušu rožābolu gremo smaidīga govs.

\* \* \*

our imaginary country's  
flowered flag  
that night we took down, spread on the table  
so that the oak boards would not hold the imprint  
of beer mug suns and pirogi crescent moons.  
on that side of the country's border  
that night we arranged a salute  
for butterflies who'd flown there in winter.

\* \* \*

mūsu iedomu valsts  
puķaino karogu  
tovakar nolaidām, sedzām uz galda,  
lai neiespiežas ozolkoka dēļos  
aluskausu saules un pīrāgu puseņi.  
viņpus valsts robežai  
tovakar rīkoja salūtu  
ziemā ielidojušiem taureņiem.

\* \* \*

quiet end, loud end?  
at some time it's all the same –  
gentle or strident,  
anecdote or legend.

but it is the end –  
like the face of odysseus in girlhood dreams,  
as in a shopping list and a ship's list  
poetry is more powerful than prose.

\* \* \*

klusas beigas, skaļas beigas?  
reiz jau būs vienalga –  
maigums vai spalgums,  
anekdote vai teiksma.

bet beigas ir –  
kā meitenīgos sapņos odiseja seja,  
kā iepirkumu sarakstā un kuģu sarakstā  
par prozu spēcīgāka dzeja.

*Amanda Aizpuriete was born in Jurmala in 1956 and studied philosophy and philology at the Latvian State University and at the M. Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow. Nine books of her poetry have been published, including Ascension Street (1986), The Last Summer (1995), The Outskirts of Babel (1999), In Skies of Heather (2003), Windfall of Poems (2004), Twilight Loves You (2005), Tonight I Was A Green Bird (2012), There (2013) and a novel. She has been poetry editor for the magazine Wellspring and co-editor of the newspaper Aspazija, the magazine Flag, and The Herald. The American composer Eric Fank used Aizpuriete's poetry for his symphony for contralto and full orchestra, This Evening Seems To Have Gone Bad, and the mono-opera Anna Ahmatova.*

*Inara Cedrins is an American artist, writer and translator.*

# GARY LANGFORD

## Twenty-first Memory Party

(i)

You were caught at the end of a long line in rough water.  
The line was from your mother, knowing you couldn't swim.  
You performed stroke for stroke from an armoury of words.  
To be the only boy caned by teachers for quoting Shakespeare.  
In the playground you threw the dice before others did.  
It was this that taught you to climb the ladder of wills.

'All the world's a stage,' even if we forget our lines to croon.  
The cold moon looms on the far wall of the early make-up room.  
Your enemy is the critic who is built by shooting others down.  
We can all be sacrificial figures, cast by others on the mound.

Tchaikovsky forgot notes, music blowing up in underground cells.  
The *1812 Overture* caught us both in the sound of the maddest bell.  
You hummed this in a mental hospital, which sorts your friends out.  
Only I visited you. Others worried insanity could be infectious.  
You were the haunted face along drug row. You kept humming.

Shakespeare's sonnets became your bible, memorising them all.  
Out of your enemies eyes you walked through an orchard of grapes.  
I signed a paper on behalf of Shakespeare, how you would leave  
without suing anybody for mistreatment. We knew loony tunes.  
You flew to Europe, touring in musical theatre for a few years.  
Return was Max Ramsey in *Neighbours*, taking him too seriously.

(ii)

Judges enjoy sentencing sorrow, weighing it up and down.  
I wrote *Friday Always Wanted to be Tuesday* for you, about you.  
The play followed you from city to city, whether played in a pub  
or a theatre didn't matter. Your songs could be sung or read.  
The witch returned to haunt you, so you drank her out in benders.  
The more famous you were, the more she tunelessly cackled.  
'Go on, call yourself as big as Hollywood, what a hoot.'

We all have assassins who smile at us the closer we get.  
You were at the top of the charts, sonnets sung as rock 'n' roll.  
Lovers grew on the scoreboard. You swung up a hundred.

They were such beautiful women they burned in memory.  
Three were hit in a day. Down the field I was defensive.  
Emotion hid in the dark afternoon of your eyes.  
You wandered the garden beds, love changing as bread.

That word could only be chiselled out of me by a successful sculptor.  
She understood what I meant by blind Beethoven and Bach's balls.  
The drunker each of you got, the less you pretended to get on.  
I walked away with my daughter. We anchored each other to life's harbour.  
Waking in Intensive Care after a car accident I wondered who put me there.  
Who was plotting? I tried to find my wits as you flew in, pouring a red  
from your pocket. 'Bums up, we're all dead.' 'Still an optimist,' I said.

(iii)

Actor's paradox: unlocking a door to find a smaller room, no window.  
The door disappeared on cue to you. 'Living in the trenches,' you called this,  
having played a lawyer in a Boer War movie; dead horses in creeks  
killed more soldiers than bullets, drinking themselves on the death line.  
By that case each of us thought the other was a marble or three loose.  
We comforted ourselves. Years drove through us like a freight train.

Evening tabloid: *Actor Jumps To His Death*.  
Driving home on a misty evening I knew this was you.  
A month ago you rang me in a reading of the suicide show.  
You were at peace, just as my mother was on her final call.  
The emperor of ice cream melted to disappear behind a wall.

All but one of your wives rang me from around the world.  
They looked for the key to the room of wealth you must have left.  
Each forgot how you gave it away. Divorcing nobody was the discovery.  
It was their rat jelly, part of your last grange hermitage collection.

I took *Friday/Tuesday* off stage, turning you into a novel.  
I drew you black and white in the night and day head on the cover.  
You held us all in spring, ending the show in winter like a war.

You waited until the final page before telling us the truth had arrived.  
How it was no movie you were in as you jumped off the high rise to fly.

Faster than any pigeon, the anarchic sorcerer arrived; you told us....

(iv)

Twenty-firsts fall as rain; a let down; a fury; adopting a new name.  
We will be a new character. We will own its face and we will turn.  
Seventy on the year's hand as I write this, whether it's read or not.  
Two novels, the play and you read *Newlands* on the radio in reptile land.  
Last name Bell, last movie as Alexander Graham Bell in a Canadian flight.  
We all heard you for years, notably as Prince Charles since you sounded  
more like Prince Charles than he did. Your cheerful reptile said this.  
I swear I heard you yesterday in the emptiness of urban air.  
I still swear in the chair and would I lie to you, your wordship?  
There is a reptile waiting for us all in the day's call, patience to patient.  
For a time your hands are vast, trying to shape everything around you.  
There is a devoted attempt to avoid the pass to our interior.  
It's raised again, no two doctor's opinion about it, out of the can.  
The reptile wheezes, grandly motioning a kiss to what looks like us.  
We hope it's a random thought, though we already look around  
to see where it falls. Goddamit, and he ain't listening, we'll have a say.  
The reptile now chuckles, 'I'll wait, break away.' I do, foot down.  
I'm first on the stage of my twenty-first memory party.  
My speech is to an empty hall. I write myself true after midnight falls.  
Another audience is on the lawn, applauding, a raucous sound.  
I am cast as the fool, even of I dance for you as the clown.

## The Lost Artist

He was cast as an artist on birth's blood-cut tongue.  
Cryptically he drew pictures, baby hands on his mother's breasts.  
She was ticklish, holding the artist as her funny little darling.

A portrait of his teacher was as political as he would get.  
No longer was he punished for drawing his way through school.  
*Blinded by Love* became his most famous painting.

A couple's eyes were covered by blinds, brightly closed.  
He was the youngest winner of the Archibald prize.  
Parents were puzzled when asked whom the blinds artist took after.

His mother shrugged. 'Always was peculiar, not in our genes.'  
Older, doubt came in an exhibition across the city's skyline.  
The artist began to wonder if he, too, was blinded on the line.

'Van Gogh's ear,' he murmured, touching his own in the mirror.  
'My paintings have sold.' Then he noticed a figure in the background.  
He turned, only to find the shadow on the wall became larger.

He painted all this in rainbow colours. Satisfied, he went to bed.  
In the morning the canvass watched him in grades of black,  
almost as if painted by an artist he was fearful of.

He buried the paint to buy more; result similar. Darkness followed,  
regardless of what he did. He moved to someone else's studio.  
Colour returned. Van Gogh was in the mirror. 'Talent burns.'

## The Lost Author

In an interview she said, 'public faces conceal what we really are.'  
Her books are about the injured party all humans are called to.  
Cruelty hangs over her characters. We have a morbid fascination.

She cooks a treat of sinewy ideas, served up to us by friendly killers.  
I am cut up in her present manuscript, tentatively called, *Kill Him*.  
All I did was ask why she also wrote poetry under a pseudonym.

Isabella de Costa, you pick poet or award winning novelist?  
Poetry sales don't make a page of her thrillers. Three are movies.  
If I'd asked if she was schizophrenic I would have died page one.

I don't like her husband, but I have some sympathy for him,  
murdered four times, mutilated three, paraplegic twice and loved once.  
His temper is an exclamation mark in the softness of desire.

He is caught between lines in poetry, off the hook and floating.  
They walk blindly in the scattered streets of each other.  
I first met her in a small group of poets I talk to in a cafe.

Gore rises in her novels like a crop. I am granted temporary solace.  
'She is mathematical with your bones,' her husband whisky-whispers.  
'Dragged out in a full moon, your last book is on her desk in pieces.'

Readers know her. A few pretend to have heard of me.  
Yet the more famous she is, the less she sleeps, winter's costume on.  
Poets will be murdered in her next novel in a long narrative.

# Michael Ceraolo

## from Euclid Creek Book Three

A section of interstate highway  
is built on land reclaimed from the lake,  
and  
even during lesser storms than this one  
is sometimes subject to wind-swept spray  
On October 29th and 30th  
2012,  
effects  
from a hurricane hundreds of miles away  
held sway,  
the sky in its varying shades of gray  
(blue banished here for several days),  
and  
waves of a height seldom seen here  
(though  
at least partially broken before hitting the road)  
poured over enough water to close the road  
for a short time,  
the lake  
seemingly trying to reclaim the space  
in human,  
rather than geologic,  
time

While only a short distance inland,  
in the backyard of a house near the creek,  
those same winds toppled a pine tree  
over thirty feet tall,  
though  
not toppling it in the typical manner;  
rather,  
a circle of green carpet was ripped up,  
still attached to the downed tree,  
roots and dirt exposed to the air,  
the tree somehow  
not having fallen on the garage,  
not having fallen on the house,  
not having fallen on a car,  
having tangled in its limbs  
both electrical and telephone lines,  
though  
not bringing either down completely  
as power and phone both continued working  
A picnic table,  
glass  
encased in a metal frame,  
may  
have sustained damage:

with  
the tree covering it and the area around it  
taped off by the local fire department,  
a damage assessment will have to wait  
until the cleanup is much further along

And the power company  
seems more hindrance than help:

even with  
tens of thousands of homes and businesses  
still without power here several days  
after the brunt of the storm hit,  
the power company had nothing to say  
about its' decision  
to act as an inept general,  
shifting  
over a thousand local workers  
to other storm-damaged areas,  
and  
leaving its home area less than fully protected  
(Some of these workers would be laid off  
just in time for the holidays,  
and  
soon after the start of the new year  
the company would try to buy some goodwill  
with a modern advertising method,  
reaching an agreement to pony up  
a little over a hundred million dollars  
over the next seventeen years  
to have the football stadium bear its name,  
even though that stadium is powered by  
its publicly-owned competitor  
Tom Johnson remains right-----

Sunday April 22, 2012  
Earth Day,

and  
the day was marked by the discovery  
of a bad earth event  
on the East Branch of the Rocky River:  
a fisherman called the hotline  
(cleverly remembered as 1-800-POACHER)  
of the state's Division of Wildlife  
to report many dead fish on the river bottom  
(it was never mentioned whether  
any of the dead fish were found in the lake itself)  
On Monday,  
officials from  
the state EPA,  
the Sewer District,  
the Metroparks,  
and the state Division of Wildlife  
arrived on the scene of the big kill,  
a five-mile stretch of the river,

to start sorting and counting the casualties,  
and  
found more than 30,000 dead:  
crappie  
minnows (including several subspecies)  
rainbow and steelhead trout  
shad  
shiners  
suckers  
sunfish  
smallmouth bass  
rainbow darters,  
as well as  
several nonfish:  
frogs  
turtles  
crayfish  
(despite its name not a fish but a crustacean)  
And  
apologies to any animals not on the list  
who were also killed

The officials  
also began the investigation into the cause  
of the disaster  
"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack"  
said one of the officials at the outset,  
but  
that turned out to be not quite true  
Because  
all reacted in the same way,  
by dying and sinking to the bottom,  
that ruled out natural phenomena  
such as low oxygen or changes in water levels,  
and  
officials started looking at man-made mendacity,  
rather than an earth event,  
as the cause of the kill,  
with  
chemical contamination being the prime suspect  
More agencies got involved:  
the federal EPA  
Wildlife's parent agency, the state Department of Natural Resources  
the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation,  
and  
in October two were indicted  
for dumping a 55-gallon drum of cyanide  
into the river upriver in Strongsville,  
where  
the couple owned a coin-and-precious-metal business  
(Previous to owning that business  
the couple owned a metal-plating company  
at the same location;  
what  
they might have been keeping the cyanide for,  
something

with no legitimate use in their current business,  
is a subject for a different poem)

The couple had tried to put the drum of cyanide  
out with their regular trash,

but

the workers rightly refused to haul it away  
The couple was then told  
they would need to hire specially-trained people  
to pick up and properly dispose of the cyanide  
(estimated cost: \$800-\$1,000)

In a public-be-damned move  
the couple decided to dump the cyanide in the river,

but

in addition to everything else wrong  
with the decision to dump the drum,  
it would also turn out not to be cost-efficient:  
big-mouth shiner were on the Ohio threatened-species list,  
with a potential penalty of \$1,000  
for each fish killed  
(dozens of dead shiners were found at the kill scene)

Later,

a plea deal

required the mentally-competent half of the couple  
to pay to the ODNR  
a restitution of \$30,893  
(\$1 for every fish killed)

"The restitution from this case  
will be used to restock the river with fish"

and

a further fine to be paid to the Cleveland Metroparks  
(said fine to be determined using a formula  
more complex than a dollar-per dead-fish),

and

there could still be jail time or house arrest imposed-----

# Steven F. Klepetar

## Final Form

Eternities surged past his face, those shadows  
at play on the subway station wall  
(waiting is a kind of glue, he thought,  
fastening eyes to the clock's rigid  
arms).

Suddenly a lamp-like  
brightness  
gouges the spaces  
within. Everything turns out to be green

in the way  
of something turning or coiling in its own  
fierce undulations.

Wave after wave  
decides what we describe on this earth –

a perfect "s" shaped track, and just past  
the final form, a conflagration  
extinguishing all the candles we have brought,  
red-hot wax bubbling toward wrists vulnerable and scarred.

## What Spotted Frog?

Here it is, this borrowed earth, this squirrel's hoard  
dug deep. Rivulets of gold seep down along sullen

paths of dull-eyed sleep. A nightly glow burning  
beyond molten rim of memory and pain.

Wrench your eyes awake, sing sweet moon's  
lullaby in hushed garden tones of night, leaf shadows

and vines, sinewy green tendrils of beans and peas  
and squash, that slow strength opening, fingers

inching through warming dirt. Yours the rough  
tongue, yours the sound straining ears. Sentences

wind along this leaf-strewn stream. What language  
sprinkles down among moss and pebbles rubbed

smooth and river white? What spotted frog stares  
at this balled up fist of space with its yellow bulging eye?

## **The Evening of Circling Birds**

Where did my familiar fling her winged  
body, her fine boned torpedo of light?

Is it night that drills waves into my  
receptive skull or something darker

than this pattern of crackling wood,  
flame snapping at shadowed trees?

Wider and wider she spirals in smoky  
night, incantation of feather and flesh.

Why have I forgotten again to unroll  
my clotted tongue in this moonlight dream?

## Until I Open My Eyes

Until I open my eyes, dreams linger,  
white moths flickering beyond fingertips

nothing exists, you are invisible  
and at most I hear tiny wolves howling

at the distant edge of sleep  
I taste darkness, breathe in its musky scent

climb a broken tower to thunder and rain,  
sky throb through smashed teeth of brick

and I teeter at the slippery edge  
and sometimes I fall and the headlong

flight thrills the heavy beast  
who lodges in my chest like sorrow's

dull ache, memory and farewell  
and then the world comes rushing back

in a stabbing torrent of light, its daily miracle,  
illusion of soft ripples, clouds on the surface of a pond.

# Post Scriptum

**Steven F. Klepetar**

## **A Shaping**

As out of clay by the potter's  
hand, as out of color and form  
or bald beauty of stone we rise

to notes of a rainy dawn. We  
are cold and new and our red,  
raw faces gleam in slicing wind.

Where have we lived before this  
earth? Or has silence been our  
home, some dark breath a vapor

in the dark? Crows launch their  
forays into cloud and ash, shriek  
and disappear. I would touch your

cheek, your dripping hair, your lips.  
Oh, make me from nothing, make  
me rise and live. I am flower

and yeast, you are water and iron  
and time and flame.  
Let me bake until bubbles rise, take

my shape in the oven of your blazing life.

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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

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