

# *Ygdrasil*

---

A JOURNAL OF THE POETIC ARTS

April 2020

VOL XXVIII, Issue 4, Number 324

Editor: Klaus J. Gerken

*European Editor: Mois Benarroch*

*Contributing Editor: Jack R. Wesdorp*

*Previous Associate Editors: Igal Koshevoy; Evan Light; Pedro Sena; Oswald Le Winter; Heather Ferguson;  
Patrick White*

ISSN 1480-6401

# Table of Contents

**Introduction**

**Klaus J. Gerken**

**Contents**

**Michael Ceraolo**

**Vladan Kuzmanović**

**John Grey**

**Robin Dunn**

**Shelby Stephenson**

**Post Sriptum**

**Klaus J. Gerken**

# Introduction

## Klaus J. Gerken

### **Where were you when Adam ate the apple?**

It doesn't matter what the poison was

Life deleted is another step upon divided paths

Where the giving taking cannot lend a hand

Nor mend beginnings fate holds in suspense

I favour life upon the moment of its emptiness

When I was forcibly expelled

From the warm and safe and comfortable womb

Nature gave each child for safety

Then religion came and moved this Adam to the tree

Blamed Eve for all the evil and reclaimed a lost decree

That no one ever understood but wore religiously

Man is God and God is Man and woman is a slave

It's hard to understand but listen to the tune

Eve was wisdom understanding Adam the half moon.

20 Nov 99

# Michael Ceraolo

*Larry Doby*

I suffered, and still suffer, from an American obsession  
Not *the* American obsession, Race,  
though "the crap I took was just as bad"  
as that that Jackie had to take,  
us both coming up in the same season,  
and it definitely affected me;  
though I had a Hall-of-Fame career,  
had I come up later I think it would have been even better  
No, the obsession I'm talking about is the one  
where only the first to do something matters:  
the second and all subsequent ones  
are deemed to be not worthy of recognition  
In 1997,  
on the fiftieth anniversary of our coming up,  
Major League Baseball decreed that all teams  
would retire Jackie's number 42,  
instead of the National League teams retiring that number  
and the American League teams retiring my 14,  
and also decreed that every April 15th  
would be celebrated as Jackie Robinson Day,  
while July 5th would be just another date on the schedule

*Frank Robison*

The people of Cleveland had made me wealthy  
by riding my trolley lines;  
did that mean I should lose some of that wealth  
providing them professional baseball?  
No, it didn't  
We generally gave them a good team to watch,  
but attendance was rarely commensurate  
with the team's place in the league standings  
The last straw was 1898:  
a team that finished fifth in the standings,  
while attendance was twelfth and last,  
in part from a boycott because I used replacement workers  
during that year's trolley strike  
Well, if attendance wouldn't correspond  
to the team's place in the standings,  
I would give them a team  
that corresponded with their attendance  
I bought the St. Louis team from their bankrupt owner  
and transferred all the good Cleveland players there  
for the 1899 season  
The result:  
the worst team in the history of baseball  
and the end of the National League in Cleveland  
No hard feelings, at least on my part:  
Cleveland is my eternal home

*Jack Graney*

I was devastated by Ray's death,  
but he'll tell his own story  
As for me,  
I wasn't a great hitter,  
but I could have been called  
The Walking Man decades before Eddie Yost  
I had a couple of firsts  
of interest mostly to trivia buffs;  
you can look them up if you're interested  
After my playing days were over  
I sold cars and did well with investments,  
but like millions of others  
I lost everything in '29  
Baseball saved me  
with a first that should be known  
by the subsequent generations  
who have profited by it:  
I was the first former player  
to become a broadcaster



*Danny Gardella*

I wasn't much of a player in Class D in my teens,  
so the fact that I was above average  
(as a hitter; I was never much of a fielder)  
during the last two years of World War II  
should tell you something about the quality of play  
With the real players coming back  
I didn't see much of a future in the game for me,  
so I took the money the Mexican League was offering  
All of us who did were blacklisted for five years:  
some of us sued, though one by one the suits were dropped  
as we were re-instated; I was the last one left  
I won in the lower court,  
and baseball hurried to buy me off  
They gave me sixty grand,  
and even with half going to my lawyer  
that was a lot more that I would have made  
had I been allowed to play, so I took it  
For a time I was down on myself  
because I thought I had sold out,  
but as time has passed I'm proud  
of my part in the fight for player rights

Vladan Kuzmanović

*Syzygy*

## Players

V formation, girls, twenty

Circles, twenty

Two faces

Two persons

Five faces

Cepheus, The King

Little boy, three boxers, jockey, boys and girls.

Scenes:

Fan

Two Faces

Lingual Mirror

Cepheus

Flower

A

Syzygy

Light

# Fan

fan face.

(V, one behind another)

whisper. a fan of faces on the right shoulder carry a whisper, whispering on the ear, head pointed over the right shoulder.

first-person kissing second, second-third, when the last one gets a kiss, they shift their head to the left shoulder, now kissing left.

love train.

a couple of girls, kissing each other in the right cheek,  
when the last gets a kiss, goes to the left and kisses the left cheek.  
a flying kiss now comes in with left cheeks to the first girl.

flying nose.

the first girl with her nose touches the next girl's nose,  
on the left shoulder, second, third, third, forth, etc.,  
to the last in a row, then the last shifts the head to the right shoulder,  
and touches the nose, from the right all to the first girl.

a guy and a group of girls.

the guy is the first nose in the line.

row from the left. boy is the first person in the series. girls are the rest of the string.  
the second nose breathes the breath of the first, the third of the second,  
the fourth of the third, etc.

smelling flowers.

girls in the row. lined up next to each other. the young man approaches,  
and smells girls, first, second,  
third, fourth, ...

## Two faces

two faces are lit, one face next to another one face is fixed,  
the other making expressions. the dark around.

the first person speaks with half mouth,  
whispering or declaiming, while the other at the same time,  
makes grimaces, opening mouth, as if he is shouting,  
stretching, but without a voice with different  
and always interesting dynamics.

is it possible  
it is real, and impossible.  
impossible!  
[yes,] not possible.

girls say A, and they become in the form of letters A;  
A young man says I and traverse under the feet of a girls

O  
Oh, I love you!  
Letter O, hug him around his waist.

the male actor shows the letter O. and makes a letter  
O, in the forth armed. the girl approaches, she bows down  
below, enters the embrace of O.

two faces.  
grimaces without sound. one is burning, extinguished.  
arguments, anger, proves. raging.  
other. declares love. in love.  
looking toward the stars. talking about love.  
mouth with the words of the song. expression.

one grimacing "ua!" another voice "ua!"

one mouth: "wonderful , I love you."

another voice: "i love you."

## Lingual mirror

Conversation with a mirror.

Two and a mirror.

The first speaks to the second,  
the second to the mirror as to the third.

After a while

the second in the mirror clashes and  
speaks to the first as to the second  
(outside the mirror. really).

"I'm you", the first to the second.

"I'm you", the first to the mirror.

"What are we?", the first to the second.

"Look at you!" The other through reflection watching  
the first, "look at you!"

"I don't talk to you but with myself."

"Either. I'm not talking to you." [answering]

"What are we?", another to the mirror.

Second thinks, looking in the mirror,

We are I.

The second says to the first: "We are I."

The third approaches and looks in the mirror: "We are - I?"

"And You?"

The other looks in the mirror, "You," "You is I, yes, You is I,  
at the same time thinking to reflection of "you" that reflects and "I".

"We are all I?" asking the third in the mirror

"You are me.", says directly to the first.

Then, showing their reflection in the mirror:

"They (thinking they in the mirror) are we (without the mirror).

Not because we are two, but because there are four of us.

I thought there were three of us.

Logically not.

"They (show) can not exist for me."

Me is only in two.

they are returning to a direct bijection. (talk)

"I'm all. I'm you." (interactively)."And I'm him." (him in the mirror)

the second "And I am you", and looking to the mirror "I am you" (the first to the third) "And I am you".

So you are not all, but we are all, and I am all.

[you are all like me.]

First approaches the mirror.

"You are all like me.

Because if you are me, [tells yourself in a mirror]

and if you are he then I'm all."

[tells himself (you) in the mirror, and to (he) the reflection of second in the mirror]

why "he" can never talk in the mirror to "you".

why your "you" can never address my "you".

why my reflection can never turn to your reflection,

my "I" in the mirror to your "I" in the mirror?

Why can we never see ourselves outside the mirror

talking to each other, inside the mirror,

why the reflection "me" can not speak with

the reflection of "you", and yet "I" can talk to "You"?

the two of them can never turn to the side, but I can,

to each other in the eye, like me and you.

because he is the projection of I, as well as you

[it is meant "you", as a reflection of "me"]

the two of them can never talk but they can,

they can not speak directly, in the mirror,

because they are projections.  
the two of them talk, if we talk, as "you" with "you".  
"You" talks to "he" (him), if "you" (me and you),  
in the mirror talks between as "you" with "you".  
So "you", as the projection "you" is for One,  
conversation of "you" with "he".  
They talk if we talk. Because they are projections of "me".

polyphony of voices.

only one circle.  
a circle with radially elevated foreheads, from the center  
to the periphery of the circle.  
then, returning their foreheads to a normal, horizontal position.

taking their hands, lifting them gradually  
follow polyphony!  
raising them to the maximum, together with the raised forehead  
as if they show power, unique energy, Logos.

# Cepheus

while three young men are mildly boxing.  
girls kiss each other in the face [five or more]  
and talk.

Jockey talks to the boy.  
The girl is skipping the rope.

Girls exchange balls.

the actor with boots is sitting on aerobics ball.

the ruler sits on a chair, touches his right shoulder with his fingers,  
his right leg is placed in front of the left [synthesis of castor and cepheus]

blue flower  
blue guys play in the circle. in the pivot is a girl with dark hair.

black guys play in the round.  
in the pivot is a girl with blue hair.

a circle of blue eyes.  
circle of the black eye.

around the blue eye plays a circle of black eyes.

around the black eye plays a circle of blue eyes.

around a blue-eyed girl, play two circles of black eyes.  
while at the same time around the black-eyed, plays a circle of blue eyes.

then one circle, the blue circle, moves to black eyes,  
and two black circles, to blue.

## Flower

girls wear three hats. one triangle. one square  
and one circle.

girls wear glasses that change frames.  
left with left white, right black, right with left black,  
right white, center with both white.

the white change of the frame into both white. and right girl.  
The central ones are both black.

left open left. right opens right. middle both.  
left open right. right left, middle hint,  
then change, left, right, opens left.

The girls take one another's carnation with their lips, not  
with their teeth, they change the carnations.

If the guys take carnations from girls they do it with their teeth.

Flowers, one in the ear, one in the mouth.

The group is mixed. Each speaks its number,  
loudly in a row.

Then returns to the girl and puts a flower in her mouth,  
dance happily after.

graph flower.

All men with flowers, whose handles are in the mouth.

(keeping handles with teeth)

All the girls with flowers in the mouth, and no handles

Occasionally they walk in pairs, and dance.

Men with suspenders and handle, girls with flowers  
in the mouth, holding under the elbow and representatively  
walking.

Carnation is given hand to hand of the participants, who are randomly placed on the stage.  
The girl throws the handle and puts a flower in the mouth, so that is turned outwards,  
playing in pairs dance, the man bites with his teeth flower, taking the flower, plays with  
several mates, change the flower.

# A

Test : diffusion-unison

Society. Filled circle. Sound band. The theater of voice.

Imitating a diffusive, dynamic noise. Speak with different strengths and heights, alternating, and overlapping, in noise, one by one member of the group, arrives and starts to produce unison, voice of unique quality, in the outer circle, others accept.

Not so fast, but uniquely. Now, two quality of sounds are gradually overcoming each other in the process. noise and unison. Noise is energy, continuation, process, irritation, divergence, surpon.

Unison is culmination, acme, active lyricism, effectuation. In an excess, in the gesture of surponed sonority, the noise is fruitilized by the act.

The surplus is a continuous diffusion and passive soundness .

Vocal articulation.

Linguistic minimalism. Durability and quality of vocals.

„A“ short, „A“ long, „A“ explosive. Long, then explosive,

Ooooooh? Uuuuuuh!

Eeeeeey? yeahuuuu!

„O“ strong, „O“ long, otherwise all the vocals, in one voice.

The locator takes up a certain facial gesture, the expression of the face (the lips narrowed, original expressions of the face).

In the facial fixation actor speaks the whole text (poem, love song). Then it changes the fixation and repeats in the changed facial expression.

# Syzygy

Five actors. Five faces.

Walk in hand. In the line, in front of the audience. Five faces as a whole. The grimace theater.

Rage. Hate. Sorrow. Imagination. Happiness.

Iteration 2.

Happiness. Rage. Fear. Sorrow. Hate.

Hope. Trill. Love. Rage. (Exhortation) Patience.

Observation. Focus (one point). Catching.

Nodding and rotating head (left-right)

Head left. Right. Up. Down. Circling.

Five faces. Five grimaces. In dynamism, each face changes grimace.

Five faces leave. Four faces return. Under arms. They're passing by. (Intermezzo)

Three faces circle around, with a nape pointing toward the other two.

They are turning in a way so spectator can notice different moods of the faces, their dynamic expression.

After a time shift, the front face is indirectly illuminated.

The faces gone out of shoot in retour are changed [the other two faces that are not in the frontal expression replace each others' affect/grimase.]

Laughter, insolence, ridicule, happiness, insult, hope, loll out,  
quiz, futility, happiness.

(three faces, three sexes, three races, three colors.)

Three faces turn

Two girls and a man. Changed in two men and a girl.

# Light

Purple and yellow circle.  
Three ropes. Chair and sun mirror.  
On three ropes that are intertwined,  
three young men climbing.

Seven or more couples.  
Odd in en face.  
Even in profile.

Enphases say "I love" and turn to profile. The profiles turn into en face, saying the same.  
Then en faces are random, in a larger number, and quick, (I love-I do not, creating a metaphysical expression)

(at any moment one voice is heard)

group A.

group circle catches light of reflector. the light at some point stops, stands and disappears.  
the group stops at the place of light, retaining, representing the light (group sun from itself).  
the light circle falls in the second place, it stands, it slowly moves, stops. the group that follows it gradually enters the light circle.  
actors are sunbathing, then they move in different gestures in the light;  
another light source is lit. the actor comes out and stands inside circle. Gradually he is joined by several from the group.

group B.

light shines. gradually, relaxed and non-chalant, one by one member of the group leave and walking the scene. only one remains. in the center of the light. music. metaphysical impression.  
the lights are racing randomly there-along the scene, in deabstract choreography.  
members catch points, in chase. the other points lit them. at the certain moment the chasing stops. circles stand. actors stand between. actors look up. lights illuminate them.  
the actors look at one another, the light circles unite, in the middle, in one light circle.

light circuit. members of the group hold hands, play in a circle. in one direction. then faster. they acclaim "aha", slow down gradually, turning towards the interior of the circle.

Unique unison "A". They gather, into the center, and raise their hands to the light.

On the stage, they talk to each other. promenade. the light circle appears, approaches. they stand in a circle group. hyperrealization. effect. sign. collectivism. deapstraction.

actors are separated. standing on stage. light illuminates several actors individually, others approach the illuminated, and form a group. original actors speak "A", other members repeat. under the sun shield.

# John Grey

## REPORTING TO THE FISHBOWL

From deep within the fish bowl,  
something orange  
silently gestures.

A bare bulb above  
shines down on my curiosity,  
the fish's dire needs.

Everything else in the house  
is where it should be,  
acting like it must.

Rooms spread away from me  
but the floor, the ceiling,  
hold their place.

Same with the table  
on which the bowl is perched,  
and the castle, the rocks within.

The toilet, the sink, refrigerator,  
are content for now,  
want nothing of me.

It's the fish that calls me out,  
its movement that attracts me,  
its expression, its interaction.

Life at fishbowl's edge  
is communication's last stand.

The poor dumb creature

wishes to be fed.

Or it wants me to know

it's not a poor dumb creature.

## SELLING UP

The auctioneer's voice  
is like a dagger  
jabbing the chests of those  
too sluggish to bleed.  
"How much am I bid!" he screams,  
as he points at a dining table  
and six matching chairs.  
Memories and feelings  
come with no extra charge.  
Buy the set and you get  
a cerebellum, ventricles, pons,  
language, calculation, sensory input  
and control of movement.  
The auctioneer continues to shout.  
Hands pop up all over.  
The price rises.  
The family may come out of this  
with nothing of their own.  
But they'll have cash in hand.  
They can afford to forget,  
to stop touching.

## **A MAN DROWNED**

He was in the middle of the lake,  
his arms thrashing in the water,  
mouth wide open, screaming for help.

Neither one of the couple on shore could swim.  
There was no help for miles.  
These two spectators felt totally useless.

"Shouldn't have gone out so far," said the woman.  
"Must have a cramp," added her husband.

He went under to a giant "Oh!"  
but resurfaced again,  
not to a cheer but a palpable sigh.

But then he sank for a second and final time.

The woman stared blankly at the now calm waters.  
The man turned away, directed his attention  
to the two cars in the parking lot.  
One was their late model Ford,  
the other, a green Toyota.  
He wondered who would ever come for it.

It was the first time either of them  
had been witness to a man dying.

A ripple-less sheen, a forlorn automobile...  
clearly remembered  
but left out of their testimony.

## SIDE-STREET BATTLEGROUND

Who knows what the latest scrap is over.

Both seek out the violence  
in ordinary events.  
Pain and love –  
they take that for reflection.

She can't wait to get him started,  
like a prize fighter  
who jabs with a tongue.

And he's not smart enough to defend with words.  
Only the flat of his hand across her face will do.

She stares back at him with her best,  
"Is that all you got?"  
Sure, her jaw stings like a wasp bite,  
but the bleeding lip  
makes for a much more belligerent snarl.

Then she throws a cup at him,  
smacks his forehead.  
And he takes a wild swing that misses.

That's when his father's words kick in.  
"Never hit a woman."

And she hears her mother.

“If he does that to you, leave him.”

There's a pause in the hostilities.

Then a moratorium.

As always, advice not taken

makes the perfect truce.

**Robin Dunn**

**Vicar**

The black threads of the tree cut into my mind like a knife; humming down over the freeway from whatever dimension they are in when they are dying—coming in to the world. This world, from its red blood pouring over the sky, saves me from the things I might otherwise write, for its terrible beauties describe the nightmares who inhabit the landscapes of the marshes around the town of Whitechurch, whose waters south of the river, where it splits, at the right hour of night, below the dying sun, pitch me darkly into the world, so that I might recover, from the burden of being alive.

There are four of them above the road, the trees, their knives etched against the red. Like murderers watching the motorists. There is a vicar here—where I am going—this man who has forgotten—or never knew to begin with—what we are doing here. What I am doing here.

Red. I am red, because it is easier than being other things, and because the locked metal bolts shift inside of my head on seeing it, like a bull, this landscape, covered in blood, and over my hands. Like a wailing woman confronting the death of all her loved ones, written into the landscape like a poem waiting to be read. No, that is not quite right. Too melodramatic. It is deeper than ghosts and dead women and loss and love and heartache. It is the color of the landscape itself: the black against the red: like the shape of my mind against the car, a nightmarish color reflected inside the prism of the world made to build these empires who keep my soul tethered to the earth.

I am being killed by England, like all of my brothers before me, marching into the iron staves of the night. The trees are our pall bearers, covering the staves with their teeth, so that we might be saved. Do not be afraid: I have been here before. It is the color of night, before it is night, and the color of death before you have died. The watchword of spirits is only your own language, turned inward: the firebolt from space inside your stomach and lungs and capillaries, working to burn better the loan of the punishment you have carried this far, in at least two parts: before, and during.

This also is not quite right, though perhaps closer: before is probably wrong. Rather it is that during—the now—is so immense that it cannot be properly described. And the person I become under its light bleeds over the edges of the moment into the man who writes these words—a necessary failure of description—and the man who is left behind, both there and then and now, like a kind of torture victim, his body twitching from the wires.

I twitch from the wires, but it is all right; these things are necessary when you have been touched. It is just par for the course. If I am a tour guide, then I must guide you, and I promise you I will show you everything that I have time for—and many things you would not have expected to have seen. I promise that bitterness itself—the beverage of my countrymen and yours—is here too celebrated as the fine winestuff to mark our meeting, and to remember us to our loved ones. That the world bound tight to the pelt of the earth, quiet and careful in its menacing intensity, this thing that is never familiar no matter how many times we see it, this palpable evil—a word I should not use, but I cannot yet think of another—is our home. My brother, I am home again, half dead, and I promise that everything I have is yours, if you want it. This is my legacy, cut from my staff, into your kingdom:

--

The road is not long. You can find the church just beyond the bend in the river, beyond the stretch of trees that stand like soldiers guarding a Neolithic burial site. The vicar—a word which means “a substitute,” takes my hand in the dark and smiles—this evil man (and here the word is fine)—my demon to invite me in.

The substitute for England is America, just as the substitute for America is England. This also is not quite right, but that is because I do not know what the substitute for America is. Perhaps it is the place which has no substitutes, even as it has no vicars. We have many preachers and apostles and wise men, charlatans and mad men and reverends and priests and slaves, but no vicars.

In standing under the dark of the English color, the man is transformed out of his body and into the trees, for the trees are also men, and in their coloration I stand eager, tired and sad, a man against some black wall in Los Angeles, or a prisoner about to be executed in some bog. Consider him in his churchyard, before the English dark becomes complete, and before my little car runs out of petrol, before we shake hands again (how many years has it been?), before I know entirely why I have come, and before the reason for the coming of the trees over the red whose knives meant I would I write this story.

“Did you find it all right?”

“No, not really,” I said. The car was still running. I leaned in to switch it off. “My phone ran out of juice. “

What are vicars substitutes for? Not God, surely. It is related to viking: some inlet of water, where the church stands.

Like God stands over us, in his deadly might, and I stand over the river a dead man, I embrace my brother to come home into the night where I had thought I could die at last...I say it like that but it is not so. I do not know what it is that happened. Or who this priest is. Not my brother in Christ or in any other capacity. A monster.

“A cup of tea for you? I’ll put the kettle on.”

“Yes all right.”

Vicar as Viking: an inlet into the water into the country. A vital slit into the vein.

Though I could be wrong I will say anyway: I am glad to be here. In the dead land of my brothers from beyond the sea.

1.

There are always so many things to do before you leave. Lock behind your keys, or leave them behind. Choose the crockery to transport. Pick the winter clothes. Arrange for a bed at the other end, assuming they let you in over the border, across the ocean, before the clock runs out.

It's been ticking for a while, have you noticed? That little background sound. Like a lover in bed, ready to get out:

Viking and vicarage come from an ancient word for clan: *weik*. The ocean is barely registered in clan histories, except as a god encountered and recorded. Just another being over the stretches of the human imagination. But the boundaries of the clan—that eternal question where one people ends and another begins—ultimately describe the nature of the evil of my brother the vicar in the village of Whitechurch, England. Not only what he decided to be, and didn't (and the same for me), but what all of us decided to be and didn't. And what, in preventing us from certain decisions about who to be and who not, the trees made possible. The trees are to blame, you see, absurd as it might sound to some of you. These old and quotidian gods of ours in all their stubbornness, made it possible for the madness to enter my brain, and that of my brother, and for the red to pour down out of the sky, in its blood-brain.

I had to catch my plane:

I'm running down the aisle (a dangerous thing to do after 9-11), and my brother is running through the marsh, and both of us, in our strange ways, are falling in love again, the way you do with brothers, mixed with a little hatred and grist for the milling of our dogmatic bread.

2.

There is a red light behind the trees and I am driving to see the vicar. I found out later that the trees are actually men—or pictures of them—stretched over the freeway where they stand on the overpass, figures which in daylight appear mischievous and strangely joyous, leaping behind one another—stick figures.

There is an owl that stands in an ordinary Hampshire wood, next to an engraving of an Easter Island head, both inscribed to Elizabeth Regis, to mark her occult power. The men trees are like that, but deeper, and older, even though they cannot have been constructed much earlier than the owl itself. They remind me of the straw men—the wicker men. the burning of the children over the bright bridge of light that is the world. But still they speak to me also of escape: both outside of and into the world.

Like the Vikings with their *wicks*—their encampments—I am hanging like a stubborn piece of religious wool caught on a tree—tied on—encamped here to make war in the only way I know how—by writing.

The enemy—a word that means literally “not a friend”—is also not specially an enemy in the way that generals and presidents and kings use it. Probably Satan is the better word, though I would try to use it in some pre-Christian sense. His name means “adversary.” Friends too can cross your path, in this sense. Act against you. And certainly those who are neither friends, nor enemies in the English sense.

Like the Red King asleep in his magical kingdom the wicker men stand as trees over the freeway overpass, running north, freeing some adversary we cannot see, and invoking in their bright stance before the red sun in his sinking the chill of the mysterious powers of the world, something so bright and vast it sinks over my body like a medical tunic, or X-ray blanket, a leaden magnet charging my flesh with orders I cannot help but obey.

3.

England does not really exist but Ing does, and I am his prisoner. Here in Ing's land, I feel the necessity of my obeisances, whose artfulness is encoded into my genes, in some place I am unable to precisely locate. That is the religion of this island. Long before Rome arrived we have our religion encoded, as is the case in the rest of Europe, into our days of the week, as you know:

Sun's day

Moon's day

Tiu's say, god of war and sky

Woden's day, the skyfather

Thor's day, his son

Freia's day, the earth

Saturn's day, the harvest, with his bright sickle

Well, the last of those gods is pretty Roman, isn't it? And many claim that the religious bodies of this island are more accurately represented in geographical terms, as in other ancient parts of the world (which is to say, everywhere): mountains, streams, forests, paths and lakes and seas and coasts and hills and circles of flowers. Gods of clouds and grasses and caves and animals. All of the people of the earth and its neighbors in the sky and in the ground and in the fairies' and other worlds next to our own.

My obeisance cannot be in writing but it is the truest way I can express it, though that is lying to you. I write to understand my obeisances, not to perform them. The performance of them is merely in walking on this island, under the gaze of these many gods, and under the guise of a visiting writer, a cloak no better and no worse than any other thousand wayfarers who came here before me, looking for all the same kinds of things: love, and shelter.

4.

It should be all right—this is something I tell myself. The way you can remind yourself of how things went and hope for it again. A form of learning? Yet what happened beneath the color of the sky seems not to be something I can learn from in the same way. Rather it feels like a door I stumbled on inside of myself, the way they appear in nightmares, extending infinitely into a realm you can explore but which you have no guarantee of leaving. I did leave it, you see. The man who called himself the vicar and I had our meeting and I left . . . but that was later.

Rather it is the color red itself which concerns me. Has the color never bothered you? It is, for instance, the traditional color of all revolutionary movements. In the middle ages, when you wanted to kill your lord, what you hoisted on the pole to see if anyone might salute was the color red. Ditto, the communist revolution. But politics aside, blood color aside, it has further unsettling elements. That low spectrum at the edges of our visibility carries with it that suggestion of edge and all its meanings: abandon hope . . . or abandon knowledge . . . abandon sense . . . or justice . . . where we approach the edge of the color red.

It's nothing, of course. We can tell ourselves it is nothing. I can tell you it was just a color in the sky. The same color you are used to seeing. But have you never felt quite this way about it? Have you ever told anyone? Some things do not kindly bear explanation . . .

It is a fixation of mine. A fixity like the flag itself, and the peasant who hoists it—even though he moves among his fellows he trusts to the fixity of the pole, the fixity of the tree. Perhaps that is all it is: this story I fell into is just one aspect of my love affair with trees. My last name is the color of trees: brown. And that is the color of my hair and eyes. But beneath a red sky we all tremble together, as our flesh before the flame:

5.

They say darkness is a friend, and maybe they're right. It's a strange friend to have, though. The kind who shows up when you least expect it, with no explanation, or any warning, and who sometimes stays longer than is wanted.

The night who moves, in his ineluctable grace, should not be feared, yet he cannot be welcomed either. He arrives in his own time, in his long sleeves, naming all of the things you had dreamt and could not name yourself, the rivers of time and the starlit gaze of all the beings who dreamt you too.

We are traveling to China, as lovers, though the world has already ended. And its circumveillanced reality, however bright, is dark to me too, for I fled before I knew why it was I had come, to England. That is: we can see all the way around it, without trying too hard, but its nature is beyond control or reason, and if it is not beyond comprehension, that is only because we comprehend it through acting it out, my dark players on our stage of life, burying the truth inside of our bodies like a terrible food that brings no satiety.

My friend darkness knows me like no other, and his grip is soft and loose, like a panther or a character in a play, telling me which lines to say and reminding me of the timing, so that I might recompense him for his grace.

I have brought a woman with me to China. After it all fell out with the vicar. I felt I knew these reasons—as though I should know! As though I should know what it is I was, and am! Better am than was, but still. I am not aware of anything I do. I just find myself doing things, and then try to puzzle out why. Like a dog chewing on a bone, which he has brought into his favorite place, beneath the house and beyond any troubling noise, to gnaw.

Into the darkness we must go, where we can find no shelter, and where all the kingdoms of my life find silence and reason—a reason whose circumference shadows all light. A reason who I tremble to know, incapable, pilgrim characterized in the famous poem as never too urgent—though I am urgent—and never too sure—though I am that too often—and always slow on the right path, through the Slough of Despond and all the rest of it, on towards god and all of his terrible friends, in the world after this one.

Of course, I have said it wrong. Darkness is none of those things. Darkness is something you know, like you know the feeling of toothpaste in your mouth, and the feeling of the covers over your night skin. The sound of your mother's voice.

“Robin?”

She is coming to meet me in China, she says. She is worried about what I have become.

“What is that, mother?”

She will not say.

6.

The vicar would not move; some attack from inside his body. I had summoned help and waited for it arrive outside in the dark, where I could see the sky.

They say the moon is reborn in every cycle; the moon is literally new. For the sun it takes longer: some period of millennia. The light in the garden is diffuse: a damp blanket cleaving last night from this prison. But the possibility of liberation: in whatever condition, and whatever place, on the sheer merits of the imagination, awaits. I wait with it, on my own, burying and unburying the hatchet.

That he is my blood, the vicar, is indisputable: perhaps this is what has enraged me. Some cousin sheared to my body like a tumor: that I am to carry as a child through some terrible pregnancy. A representative of the Queen: but not only a baby-eater. This tribal initiate: guardian however inadequate of these territories stubbornly bequeathed to our children.

He is at the hospital, attended by the deacon. The word has a terrifying root: “to hasten from all sides.” Surrounding the truth in order to quash it.

The older I get the more I respect the quality of Hamlet most subject to the criticism of readers and playgoers: his indecision. To me it seems that insistence on delay kept everyone alive—for a few more hours.

But the use of that indecision for me—the notion that I could make peace with England—the idea that Claudius and his adulteries and betrayals could be preserved in this life—that our findings despite their burning truth could be filed away for some more convenient hour—it has already passed. That is, I want to believe I could be Hamlet because of the preserving power of his indecision but I already decided long ago. Long before I came to England.

Perhaps the revolution of my ancestors—once on these shores and once on others—was never about kings of forms of government, or even land. Perhaps the religious war trumped all other concerns, and its fragmentary union of the disparate selves who inhabit these bodies we call human leashed and liberated us both at once: leashed to this conflict with the European monarchs, and liberated from the boxes into which they had thrown our peasant ancestors. Irrespective of parliamentary debate or questions of landownership turned the fires of the night over which our dreams depended, strands of life descending over the waywardship of this life, bonded to and breeched from the earth. Tied again, *re ligio*.

Thomas Browne’s magnum opus, *Religio Medici*, from the period that spawned my absurd American warrior tribe, the Seventeenth Century, stands as a monument above other things to the Orwellian fear (300 years before his birth) of speaking your mind. To avoid being taken for a heretic, Browne delivers a tractatus on not delivering a tractatus. Another kind of Hamlet. These priests and their tribal fears writ into the logics of our hands and bones—the images we see in sleep.

I must go to the hospital.

7. Perhaps a vicar is a kingdom all his own: they say the religion is dead but it is not so. It is tied to so many things: even the shape of your breath. The names you have for the sky. Clothes and paths and boats. The relationship you have with birds. All the village conundrums and fealties spread out over the hill and field, numberless beyond the imagination.

If I am tied again let it be to the *weik* again, so I can know my place inside of the dreams of my ancestors, waiting for the word in the dark.

Here is my word to you, brother. I am dead, but I am whispering into your heart all the things we've yet to do together.

# Shelby Stephenson

## SONG FOR WASPS

Scary thing, I have been stung,  
    an intrusive man,  
when I must walk among  
    the stored farm-tools in the barn  
and in the dusty bin of the feed-room.  
    I move fast and whirl like a fan,  
conspicuously awkward, no song could fit my tongue.  
    And, yet, I do not tear your nest down.

You are such a pain.  
    You bug me and make me jump.  
I tell myself I would never be the same  
    if I could not buy Fig Newtons at Publix  
or Piggly Wiggly, since you would never be the same  
    if I declared clash on your rump.  
It's good that I'm not allergic to your sting.  
    I wish I could take my hurt to the garbage dump.

A severe reaction to your smart could cause my face to swell.  
    That's not fair, praise be.  
And I certainly don't want my lips to burn and smell  
    like my throat itches to accommodate your squeeze.  
You make me want to take an easy-to-use webinar  
    on WASP – oh what an acronym –  
White Anglo-Saxon Protestant? This I tell:  
    Hudson Motor Company made a 1955 Sporty Hardtop Wasp automobile.

## MYSTERY

It is wonderful how I long  
to see the baby raccoon  
reunited with its mother,  
all day in late May

the tiny cuddle snuggling  
into itself at the oak's base,  
the lithe five finger-like toes,  
the most beautiful tail

in the world, those rings  
black and slightly brown,  
the mask, the mouth searching  
for its mother gone to where

I said No animal can  
be lovely as you among  
earthworms and roots of poison  
ivy lying beside the tumbled

suet-cage, part of baby's  
education, to be born  
in a nest and be left  
unable to wander more

than hairs blow black and white  
through weaning's stages soon  
coming to a new den in the night  
while I am sound asleep.

## FOR MY MOTHER

She dabs the beans with Sevin Dust.  
The beetles slough their pestering.  
They fill the middles with justice.  
She stoops in motion's peskiness.

She hums to show she fully sees  
The scene, a cluster of neighbors  
Sitting around the den shelling  
The whitish green beans – no labor.

The conversation bears run-ons,  
The fun of connecting some mull  
Of talk with someone's aching thumbs  
And fingers, too, for swamping hulls.

The shellers leave and she washes  
The butterbeans in a basin  
And drains what water makes a slosh,  
Before she gets her bedtime in.

When the fall comes, she stands as queen  
Of limas she put up last spring.  
Oh that's just what the future means,  
Her garden full of butterbeans.

## MIDDLE CREEK SCENES

There were bullies about. I did not know  
To call them that. Bigger boys than I, then,  
I say, to shine good in memory's troll  
While they laugh to jeer wonder when water  
Wandrest waves to hurt. The big boy holds my  
Head under long enough to laugh and set  
Me up for sixteen weeks of swim-lessons.  
Does someone who does that feel groin-grown?  
Or, by chance, Charles Atlas or Superman?  
Could be the picture of domination?

My brother was fishing, caught a nice bass  
He placed behind a limb up on the bank.  
That fish did one kip-up and flopped right back  
In the creek while Paul jumped up and down for  
Kindness. Perhaps the boy who ducked my head

Never learned. He lived for beer, suicide,  
Of sorts. He ran out of people to box  
Or crown as weak his deception for voids  
In a world of swimsuits, counterpoises,  
Origins which tempt legitimacy  
As smiles rest pedigree unless mothers  
Are not looking. I know that water-scene  
Changed my life from the risk of mellowing

Years at conferences on topics like  
"Growing Up Whole" to "Staying Home to Work  
The Farm." My father wanted me to do that.  
He avoided sun like ambassadors  
Out with a pole and line to fish for bass  
In Middle Creek. He was dark-complected,  
Too, he would say, charging one to take him  
On to quote demands of jest or sorrow.  
He was a natural man. The boys gave

Me nicknames. Among them, Runt. I've adorned  
Them all: Freck, Smoke, Red-on-the Head – with love –  
Just to keep from giving up. Raise a hand

Against war, I say, and then move on out  
To leave tyrants alone in seats of fear  
That break the principle of Goldilocks.

In quarrels hardship warns the bride and groom.  
So much depends upon self-control, sense.

## PETER COTTONTAIL

Out of a soul of fortitude I feel  
For rabbits I have killed for our table  
While a boy I wandered with my 12-gauge  
Iver-Johnson, full-choke, a squirrel gun,  
Really; yet I was eventually hunting farewell  
Longing for the good I grew toward.

I mean I quit shooting small game and grew toward  
A heaven of sorts, loving and feeding these creatures to feel  
The past as a mallet John Hurt used as farewell  
To trout he caught on the bottom of Big Rock Lake for our table.  
Today you must use a chapel-voice to whisper *gun*.  
It's one of those words out of the darkness of my 12-gauge.

The rabbit dies in searing light, a tumble from my 12-gauge.  
The cottontail does that, bounding beyond me toward  
Its squat to feel the number 8 shot from my 12-gauge.  
The swamp rabbit is another memory: how I feel  
For it, too, now that my hunting days, for our table,  
All those Thanksgiving hunts, gone, as one grand farewell.

How true art is to never set on one farewell,  
Yet so noble its care, my heart could be iron from my 12-gauge,  
Plus a taste of run-off from the swamp at our table.  
Swiftly and safely the past progresses from screams to end a time toward  
Killing rabbits. Notice that I do not say *bunnies* for I feel  
Those days make miseries for the little rabbits running from a gun.

There is a cottonfield in the affairs of the gun.  
There are hunters galore around that field in sunset's farewell  
Out of desire to settle and be "one of the boys" I feel  
As currents do not suit the ventures of my 12-gauge  
I borrowed \$16.00 from my Uncle Reuben to buy as I grew toward  
The deep night of manhood in the neighborhood supporting our table.

I bought the Iver-Johnson at Farmer's Hardware. I could see our table  
Leaning with cooked game from our hunts, the result of my gun  
On its voyage of full blast without choking toward  
Repose, but keeping the smell of fire and farewell  
To the rabbits hunters jumped out of brambles as I held my 12-gauge  
To my face, shooting in the field I could touch and feel.

I have never said farewell to our table,  
Though I quit hunting with my 12-gauge a long time ago, that gun,  
As I say, which haunts the hunts of my life, I feel, to create futures I move toward.

# Post Scriptum

Klaus J. Gerken

## THE GIRLS OF GLADSTONE

The girls of Gladstone	d
Never give their wares away	a7 d
The girls of Gladstone	d
Walk the streets both night and day	a7 d
The girls of Gladstone	g
Read you like an open book	d
The girls of Gladstone	d
Are quick to catch a knowing look	a7 d

The girls of Gladstone  
Are beautiful and always fair  
The girls of Gladstone

Have money braided in their hair

The girls of Gladstone

Grant the deepest lost desires

The girls of Gladstone

Caress you like an open fire

Every now and then they say they care  
d em

Every now and then you try to believe them  
d em

Every now and then they really do  
d em

But they leave you in some alley at the foot of no return  
d a7

The girls of Gladstone

Open up their wounds to you

The girls of Gladstone

Know the pain that love accrues

The girls of Gladstone

Willingly compute the cost

The girls of Gladstone  
Know what they have won or lost

The girls of Gladstone  
Step upon the stones of time

The girls of Gladstone  
Know the truth is only lies

The girls of Gladstone  
Ratify each deal you make

The girls of Gladstone  
Steal and then return your faith

Every now and then they say they care  
Every now and then you try to believe them  
Every now and then they really do  
But they leave you in some alley at the foot of no return

27 Aug 99

# Copyright Information

All selections are copyrighted by their respective authors.

Any reproduction of these poems, without the express written permission of the authors, is prohibited.

YGDRASIL: A Journal of the Poetic Arts - Copyright (c) 1993 - 2020 by Klaus J. Gerken.

The official version of this magazine is available on Ygdrasil's World-Wide Web site  
<http://users.synapse.net/kgerken>. No other version shall be deemed "authorized" unless downloaded  
from there or The Library and Archives Canada at  
<http://epe.lacbac.gc.ca/100/201/300/ygdrasil/index.html> .

Distribution is allowed and encouraged as long as the issue is unchanged.

Note that simultaneous submissions will not be accepted.

Please allow at least 90 days for a reply.