

Yggdrasil

A Journal Of The Poetic Arts

December 2016

VOL XXIV, Issue 12, Number 284

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

Bruce Wise

CONTENTS

Milton P. Ehrlich

Sandeep Kumar Mishra

A.J. Huffman

Jonathan Beale

POST SCRIPTUM

Bruno Cat Gerken

Introduction

Bruce Wise

Ancient Melodies

by Esiad L. Werecub

No longer are they heard, the ancient melodies
of Greece, so beautiful and lovely to the ear.
One now can only imagine their mellow ease
played o'er the centuries, so far are they from here.
Like waters from th' Aegean Sea, they lap upon
the rocky shores of sandy, sunlit yesteryear
and splash in waves of luscious foam in rosy dawn.
That music draws us back to simpler times and ways,
but they, like those of then, are all forever gone;
and yet we long for them—those wonderful, sweet lays,
those haunting and inviting sounds, those bellowings
beyond our world, our understanding, and our praise.

Before the Fight

by Wilude Scabere

He stands in Herot, one whom time has not forgot.
He waits for Grendel t' enter Hrothgar's mighty hall.
It is a peaceful moment. They have not yet fought.
The light from torches flickers softly on the wall.
The amber arm of Beowulf is stretched outward.
He's ready for whatever comes. He is so tall.
His back is firm. The fire bathes it. He's no coward.
His bed is hard, the floor of wooden planks in stead.
His body is the building's treasure—gold showered.
He feigns sleep, flexes arms and hands beneath his head.
He steadies nerves, and settles bare upon one thought.
He is the master of what fate has now procured.

The Shadow of Masuji Ibuse

by "Clear Dew" Ibuse

He threw away his youth into the gutter of
Waseda's ghetto, like a salamander trapped
beneath the water in a cave, Aoki above,
Homei below, a trout who swam past a coy carp.
Then the Great Kanto Earthquake hit Tokyo
in 1923, and fire-flames enwrapped
the city, so he took the train home to Kamo
and comfort from his family. When he went back
to Tokyo's despair, Tanaka Kotaro
was there to find him work, find him a wife, and drink
beneath plum blossoms in the night, a goose, in love,
he frees, before the coming wars and rain blinked black.

The Present Daguerreotype in Brown and Oil

by Red Was Iceblue

He sits, like Whistler's mother, Nikola Tesla,
back in a chair with Ruđer Bošković's book,
Theoria Philosophae Naturalis.
He seems absorbed in 't; but it could be just a look;
as he slouches in front of the great spiral coil
of his high-frequency transformer at New York.
It seems as if he is beside a fan of foil,
a time machine about to whirl him to a world
beyond the present daguerreotype in brown and oil.
He seems at odds within a space that's curved and curled,
that's spinning out of all control, that nonetheless
seems staid and static even as around it's whirled.

The Crysler Building

by Dic Asburee Wel

Between East 43rd and 42nd Streets
on Lexington in New York City, climbing high
into the atmosphere, above 1000 feet,
it stands—the Crysler Building—pointing to the sky.
This sample of Art Deco architecture shines
above where gothic, eagle gargoyles cast an eye
down to the city's patterned blocks and walks and lines,
a peopled chessboard. Sleek, the domed crown rising o'er
the 61st floor gleams and literally blinds,
a mix of nickel, chrome and steel, nirosta, or
enduro planished, topped off with a stainless-steel,
185-foot spire, which seen makes one's neck soar.

Milton P. Ehrlich

BEING 6 YEARS OLD IN 1937

Every time I heard
the threatening rants
of Hitler and Mussolini
on our Philco Baby Grand,
I had the same nightmare:

They were coming after me.

If that wasn't bad enough,
I kept going to funerals
of grandparents, aunts,
uncles, and cousins.

Cancer was in the air.

Bewildered by the word,
I had no idea what cancer
could possibly mean.

All I knew it was something
that could kill you.

I must avoid it in any way I could.

Every weekend we drove
in my father's Model-A Ford
to grandparents in Brownsville.
I figured the glow of headlights
from oncoming cars might
give me cancer.

I never told anyone why I kept my eyes
tightly scrunched shut on the drive home.

When I overheard my uncle
brag about his son marrying
a virgin, I couldn't wait to meet
the bride who I assumed
would be a fairy-godmother
who might grant me my every wish.

MAMA'S "BOAT"

Mama
was always
in a hurry loaded
down like a pack mule,
both arms laden with heavy
bags filled at Mr. Hoffmans' vegetable
store more than a dozen blocks from home.

He'd wet a pencil stub with his tongue, reckoning the amount on the side of a paper bag, adding up the sum in lightning speed.

Huffing and puffing with determined alacrity, she's rush alongside the trolley cars, past Davega's hardware, Hildebrande's Ice Cream Parlor and the Maspeth Movie Theatre. For ten cents I'd get lost every Saturday matinee watching double feature films and serialized "cliffhangers" like "Captain Marvel," "Buck Rogers" and "Tom Mix." It was always a shock returning to reality in bright sunlight, green around the gills from stuffing myself with rancid popcorn and dazed from glimpsing at the dark mystery hidden between Rita Hayworth's gleaming thighs.

More than Mama loved eating, she loved feeding others. Arriving home, she's unload on the kitchen table a veritable cornucopia

of Macintosh apples, blood red oranges, purple eggplants, rutabaga, kohlrabi and a mountain of huge potatoes.

Each school day at noon, I'd run home for my favorite lunch: a "Boat." It was scooped out insides of a rotund plinth of an Idaho potato metamorphosed into a succulent vessel of melted Velveeta, milk-soaked, buttered mashed potato sprinkled with salt and paprika, replaced and encased in a crisp, crusty skin. She'd always hoist a tiny white sail mounted on a mast of one of my Pick-Up-Sticks.

Oh, mama, mama: Make me more "Boats." I'd sail around the world in one of them if only I could.

MAMA

I must call and tell her I'm on my way.
Tremulous, I can't recall her number.
Awakening with a sense of loss, palpable
as the searing pain of a phantom limb
I realize she died years ago taking with her
the granite plinth that supported our home.

Widowed, she sat in the kitchen with
a yellow linoleum floor watching morning soaps.
Afternoons she occupied the co-op bench glued
to news on a transistor, waiting for Saturday
night to sing along with Lawrence Welk,
crocheting afghans with preposterous
designs, a jarring hodge-podge of orange,
green, pink and black.

A ready hand for a fevered brow, a midwife
when babies came, she kept clothes scrubbed
washboard- clean, diapers too, hauling clotheslines
back and forth till sheets and clothes lined up in size places,
dried with sun-baked fragrance, *geschmack*, she'd say.
She pried open stuck windows repairing dead
weight lead sashes as quickly as she plunged

the toilet when it refused to yield.

A whirlwind homemaker, baked our bread,
chopped liver in a wooden bowl, a Flamenco
dance without castanets.

Her turkey dinners featured sweet potatoes
oozing Karo syrup and melted marshmallows.

On holidays she filled crystal dishes
with new sour green pickles and jumbo
olives stuffed with red pimientos.

Her recurring mantra:

“It’s only from leftovers that makes you fat!”

Her ample girth reflected how much she loved
to bake. I can almost sniff the scent wafting in
from her pantry filled with apple pie, honey cake
and poppy-seed cookies.

Visiting her in the ICU after major surgery,

the first thing she asked:

“Have you had your lunch yet?” M.P. Ehrlich 199 Christie St. Leonia, N.J. 07605

MY YIDDISHE MAMA

I must call and tell her I'm on my way.
Tremulous, I can't recall her number.
Awakening with a sense of loss, palpable
as the searing pain of a phantom limb
I realize she died years ago taking with her
the granite plinth that supported our home.

Widowed, she sat in the kitchen with
a yellow linoleum floor watching morning soaps.
Afternoons she occupied the co-op bench glued
to news on a transistor, waiting for Saturday
night to sing along with Lawrence Welk,
crocheting afghans with preposterous
designs, a jarring hodge-podge of orange,
green, pink and black.

A ready hand for a fevered brow, a midwife
when babies came, she kept clothes scrubbed
washboard- clean, diapers too, hauling clotheslines
back and forth till sheets and clothes lined up in size places,
dried with sun-baked fragrance, *geschmack*, she'd say.
She pried open stuck windows repairing dead
weight lead sashes as quickly as she plunged

the toilet when it refused to yield.

A whirlwind homemaker, baked our bread,
chopped liver in a wooden bowl, a Flamenco
dance without castanets.

Her turkey dinners featured sweet potatoes
oozing Karo syrup and melted marshmallows.

On holidays she filled crystal dishes
with new sour green pickles and jumbo
olives stuffed with red pimientos.

Her recurring mantra:

“It’s only from leftovers that makes you fat!”

Her ample girth reflected how much she loved
to bake. I can almost sniff the scent wafting in
from her pantry filled with apple pie, honey cake
and poppy-seed cookies.

Visiting her in the ICU after major surgery,

the first thing she asked:

“Have you had your lunch yet?”

SMILES OF MY CHILDHOOD

When I was a young boy
I had a smile on my face
that never went away
until I saw Newsreels
of Mussolini and Hitler.

Father scared me when
he said they might be
coming after us. If they
came to my house, I planned
to stick my foot out, trip one,
and hook him with my daredevil
fishing lure.

I would shoot him in the eye with
my Daisy Red Ryder B-B gun like my
mother said never to do, and have
my fat little brother sit on his head
until he cried: "Uncle!"

I never knew there was going to be
so much dying and crying.

It wiped the smile right off my face

MODI SAYS HELLO

Addicted to absinthe and hashish,
Modigliano was a troubled soul.

Impoverished in Paris before the war,
he lived without running water
and moved whenever the rent was due.

He roamed the streets in drunken squalor,
desperate to sell his art for a drink.

He clowned around with razor-sharp wit,
meningitis eyes and sparkling lips.

Incensed by anti-Semitism in France,
he'd take off his pants, and dance naked
on café tables to show he was circumcised.

Painfully aware of the Royalists' role
in the Dreyfus Affair, he'd gaze intently
in to the eyes of a bourgeois
and greet him with a blazing surprise:

"Hello, I am Modigliani;
I am a Jew"

Scott Laudati

time won't save us now

i sit above
them at my
desk and look
down at the bars.

all the bars
all with
400 ipa's on tap
and 80 imported bottles.
and they come
from parts of the
world i used
to dream about
going but
it seems impossible
now that a place like
prague actually
exists
and you can go there if you want
and people there
are sitting
and drinking
just like you.

and when i think about prague
i feel like they
just know
and they never
feel the tension.
they can
sit and drink
and waste time
because
they can't fall far
enough to bypass
pity, they'll never know
american blame

and they scream
downstairs

and fight
and the girls cry
into cell phones
and men with
good haircuts
but loose khakis
and polo shirts
rule my city now.
and they follow the
girls and
promise them something
i can't

in
new york
it doesn't matter
anymore if you
can dress yourself.
a good haircut here
costs \$150
a week.
in a city
where no one drives,
that says
the same
thing
about a man
a Maserati does
somewhere else.

and
it still
says
the same
thing
about me

if i could go back i'd change everything

it's been a little
while since
i took the
typewriter
out

i've
moved
on i guess

another girl.
a different time.

those keys
she cleaned
one by one
they don't
work so well
since i threw
it
out of
my window.
i don't know how
it missed the
taxis and the tourists,
but it
didn't even
bounce.
it
just sat
there
staring up at me
until i went
down and picked it up.
it's a hex
on my heart
that chills
like a cat
or a guinea pig,
offering nothing
but i still try and
feed it my soul
sometimes,
and now most
of the
keys refuse to move

or they
jam

i know
it's
a broken
machine
but sometimes
on nights
when i'm feeling
brave
i'll try
those keys
again
and when
they cross and catch
i'll arrange the
letters
in different
patterns
hoping
there's a message
there,
a riddle
that
will lead me back to her

you can see
why typewriters
fall like
anvils
from my window

we need the bomb

we turned on the tv
and they said, "we have
the bomb, they
have the bomb,
the one's to the
north
and the west
have the bomb,
but now
THEY
are trying
to get
the bomb
and when they
do
the world will finally
go out
as it
came in-
the cataclysm of
fission and fusion
and all the fury
of a billion
years of anger,
the madness of good men,
and with their deaths
will go
the anger
as it gets brought
back
to the place-
wherever that
place is
that
anger comes from.

I was stoned enough
to be
afraid
but you sat with
me and drank
something made
for a
vacation
we never
went on

and you said,
“well,
we better get
the bomb before
they do.” And
you took me
to the bedroom. And
for the first time
you
were violent
and you
were terrifying
and the wall shook
and i
went
blind
with helpless orgasm.

i’m not sure what the
bomb
will look like
on the day all the leaders
get together
and decide to play
a big game
of dodgeball,
but
for the andromedans,
and the reptilians
watching
from the moon-
it’ll probably
look like
the earth
going
blind
with helpless orgasm.

Sandeep Kumar Mishra

Sleep-On Sale

Every night I wander around bed- town

To buy some tranquil delights homegrown,

Dark ghostly mysteries of human life

Persuade me to escape from the day of struggle and strife.

I am eager to go that land of forgetfulness, of that unknown territory,

I track but can't find a way to make me weary.

When unfulfilled desires hover frequently,

My fancy wide awake weaves his web brilliantly.

Sleep is a dream girl, a musk rose fragrance,

Melodies of a cookoo, the serenity of romance,

These beauties in bounty I always cherish,

But every nocturnal errand will be quite garish,

Because sleeplessness is my love interest,

Day sympathies me but nights torment.

I am impelled to sell my reluctant sleep,

If you are willing to buy and ready to weep

I have changed my mind

I want to lift the raven pal of my doomed future

To see if there is some silver line in the dark,

No, wait! I have changed my mind

As it might show me

The coming disaster,

I might not be able to face,

I have reconciled with my

Shattered dreams,

Broken heart,

Lonely nights,

Sullen days,

Weary body

And tortured soul,

I feel the prick of pain

In the corner of my heart

When life does not torture me

She walks in rhyme

When my eager-eagle eyes saw thee,

I found a thrall in the veins,

A stop in the labor heart pumping the red;

A day of golden sun in summer bright,

She comes as morn's refreshing breeze,

A live garden forever in bloom;

Half shy of thy own glory.

Fair than the fairer, a shine that never fades,

Her aspects best of dark and light;

Her lips are coral red,

Cheeks are roses red and white;

A valley in the breasts, deep and steep

A smile that wins a thousand realms,

Her charm that pleases,

Might waste your youth in sigh;

Her airy hair is swinging spider' silver line,

Mild voice fades like an old opera tunes;

The perfume of her soul feels you vigor,

She walks in rhyme,

A thousand nameless graces moves;

When she dances with autumn leaves,

A soft whisperings vibrate in our spirit,

She shakes the earth beneath and the sky above;

For she is a deity, incarnation,

Only see through my close eyes.

You can forget me now

When I breathe last,

Don't weep at my grave or inscribe a stone

For I won't be there;

Death is slave to the luck,

Nothing it could do;

I will change my form,

My ashes will be one with the crust of the earth,

I would revolve with its diurnal path

And be live again for forever,

Eternal I become.

For me, life would mean all that more than

If ever meant whatever,

You can afford to forget me now.

Descend into the Earth

Death devoid of feet or form,

How to trace his footprint?

See its image in the mirror of vitality,

Find its spirit in the body of life;

Look! Death inside the flesh,

Mount on the funeral pyre;

Feel the body fabric burning;

When we descend into the Earth

But rise towards the Sky,

Enter into a new home,

Remember! When the Sun sets, the Moon rises.

A.J. Huffman

Alligator



from Alligator this Defiance **10**

from Alligator this Defense **11**

from Alligator this Loneliness **12**

from Alligator this Patience **13**

from Alligator this Remembrance **14**

from Alligator this Enlightenment **15**

from Alligator this Dream

of consumption creeps in,

drips

from the side

of the moon that doesn't

sleep. A faucet with fangs

cannot be turned off. The invasive

sound of scales scrapes

against ceiling, waiting for jaws

that never come.

from Alligator this Whisper

Undecipherable, ancient guttural

growls

 bounce about the four

corners of my brain. I was not

born to translate

 these audible hieroglyphs,

yet my body jumps at their command.

Nocturnal bullet

 on a hairpin trigger,

I contract, my edges like a smile

of authority, fully showing bite.

from Alligator this Suspense

Motionless, wading in blackness, three
eternities deep, I am ghost of patient
annihilation. Waiting
for nighted spotlight. Energy
focused on prey, I ride
the current closer. Slowly pulsing, pursing,
conserving. Eruption's force
coiled into timed countdown . . . 3 . . .
2 . . . 1 . . .

Teeth.

from Alligator this Bark

Scales sparkle, evolution's scars
floating, unanimated buoy. Life-taker,
not saver, wanders the water
by moonlight. Isolated island,
uncharted, maps paths of silent
destruction. Carnivorous log,
stalking banks for prey,
makes not a ripple. Not one
single wave.

from Alligator this Bite

Liquid, nitric flash of instant

death. Realization

lands too late. Jaws find jugular.

Flesh – torn.

Blood – lost.

Prey – consumed

at leisure. Reptile king has conquered

bank and beck.

from Alligator this Emulation

Treading water up to my eyes, I can
no longer differentiate my skin from
the slime coating the water.

This is peace.

A moment

of solidarity with world, too timid
to face me. I imagine

I am

log,

leaf,

lily

pad. Buoyancy flutters down my scales,
an out of tune aria, an echo of
release, a memory. I hold
my breath and sink, in retreat
of its grip.

from Alligator this Reflection

My beast and I bargain at the bank.

I am eager

to dissolve beneath the surface, sink

deeper into self-

induced solitary

confinement. Walls of water, welcome

waves of sanity. The other propels me

away from that bladeless edge, compels

me to slink into shallower shadows,

carnivorous caverns where patience

and devouring psychopathy battle

for control of the inevitable urge

to kill.

from Alligator this Defiance

I am reticence. Embodiment
of immobility, I claim this world
as my own. Trespass is immediate death
sentence, punctuated with points of teeth
submerged until needed. I am not scaled
corpse floating face down, stagnant
as the waveless waters around me. I have
land legs and liquid dreams. To conquer
is the goal of every waking breath.

from Alligator this Defense

They hate me because I am not predictable,
no sleek creature of the deep. I am
as textured as thought, abrasive as nature.
You cannot penetrate the shell that contains me.
I am vault, locked by teeth. Taste is key.
You are welcome to crawl
inside.

from Alligator this Loneliness

The green you see is emotion

al. Less

camouflage, more envy. It imbues

muscle [and] movement.

I am puppet, beast

dangling

on invalidation's

strings.

My strength

of jaw,

invalidated by primal directive:

Forward. Facing

this solitary option, I instinctively attack.

Aggression is the only release

I am granted.

from Alligator this Patience

They label me *killing*
machine, God of River

Death. I am neither.

I am survival

at its most efficient. I hunt
to perpetuate, consuming
only when necessary.

Forgoing additional prey
for days, months, rumors
of years (but that would be
desperation). I am pro-active

conservationist. Watch me waiting . . .
waiting . . . waiting . . . you never know
when I am coming

to strike.

from Alligator this Remembrance

Rising from a time before time,

I am descendant, prehistory's allocation.

I have earned my right to survive.

To conquer.

To dominate.

To devastate

if I so choose. But I do not.

I simply remain, restrained predator,

lone ruler of this river's banks.

from Alligator this Enlightenment

Waves of trespass, scared stagnant, breathe
in different levels of consciousness. Necessity
becomes primary focal, drives monster to maintain
median temperament. Devastation is not
mandated as part of legacy, though instilled
trepidation is key to survival. Floating teeth
understand seclusion, refuse to equate it
with anything less than complete
contentment.

Jonathan Beale

2 Riddles

After Charles Simic

Tangled as a spiders web
Lines interlocked
The riddle of "Why!"
Dogs barking; heard to advise.

In the world of *reason*
The paradox is found
-wanting and teasing
Look back: look behind you.

The other riddles
Solve themselves
(Can I slip in a sonnet
Amongst this belief?)

The otherness remains
As a leviathans microscopic paradox's
Drenched in mystery
Lost in myth. Now, you'll never know.

His autograph

Snaking across the paper
In long dried ink.
Divisible by choice and experience.
Then, he was driven by a
Truck or a taxi.

In an army on his
Dull day job (accounting)
The Fates died and fell.
Now his manly scrawling
Signature – a prize -
For him to cash in his chips
To pay the off mortgage
of his life – as you or I would.
From an everyday
meaningless act.

Rachmaninov

Nature's god fingers of pure lightening
A mind in two worlds of neither one or the other.

Vast hands bridging depths of nature
Across its axis; an acme; lost in cloud.

Mozart

Know by his infancy by his hand simplifying the world
The death toll never too far away – the pulsing life
Too, too, small for such infantile mind to fulfil – shattering
The glass surrounding blending with the silver petals.

Sibelius

A cold hard epic heart elliptical - brash
Snow swept diamond paths from Aurora Borealis
To the Arctic Circle. He creates a world
Every cell each note – a universe in an instance.

Beethoven

The busts littered the room a vast one upon its own plinth
The form of his hair –fiery vast frightening beholden to no one
Heads everywhere – his eyes see all as his music touches all
One aspect of *being*, being denied him, still he conquers.

For an undiscovered composer

Themes threads exist in the world outside of rules:
Outside of syntax accidental meaning and meeting.
A thread is cast one in a trillion will see; catch and weave
Bringing to life a new being a new epoch just for eternity

Holst

It is written in atoms in quarks and hemidemisemiquavers
A coin is spun along the River Thames path along the Terrace
The living cosmology kisses minds of children of all ages
As every human deed singularly or collectively is acted out

Rachmaniov II

Hooray Hollywood – the hills hands welcome
His encompassing hands touching all without prejudice
Music as the cinematic – in an unreal world -
Casting light down the boulevard – making vast what is small

Mozart Again

Years on he fell through the doorway – taking the paupers door
The kings, queens, great and the good he played for – then he took
the grand exit on this earth – monuments remain today undamaged
by time and tide – generations... revive – revive – revive....

Post Scriptum

A poem by Bruno Cat Gerken, my cat:

\

,

\\ run

-\\-

bcg 1040pm, 29 nov 2016



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 - 2016 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.