



God Save VJ All:
Eclectic Verse
(With or without
The Revolution)

by Anna L. Cates

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The Antediluvians

And so the returning tide again
Covers the sand.
The earth shudders—
Waters rush upon the land.

“Don’t go,” said the sage,
Smoothing his silver head.
“It’s cold on the waves,
Eels rise.”

“We wear boots on the dock,
Trudging through sludge or mist.
We trust Morgana and Eve.
Our boat waits.”

“But stay,” said the sage,
“There’s harm in all of that.
Gulls will dash themselves
Upon the rocks.”

“We want to stay,
But hear the voice of many waters.
Ships slip through Neptune’s pass.
His eyes gleam like fire.”

“But please,” said the sage,
Strumming his golden lyre,
“Above Atlantean cliffs,
Olives ripen.”

“But children vanish from the trees.
Atlantis descends to the pit.
The nymph’s mouth seals together
Like a clam refusing saline or milk.”

“I see,” said the sage,
Grasping his lofty trident,
“The earth becomes a bloody pore.
The worm infects a festering sore.”

“So we must brave the salty spray
And spare the rubies in our crown.
The foundations are softening.
The waters crash upon the isle.”

“Then go!” said the sage,
Blotting an aqueous eye.
“The trees are swaying on the height.
The comet soars across the sky.

“His tail unfurls a freezing rain
Across the abyss of night.
I hear the dragon hiss
Through teeth clenched like a fist.

“So hurl back your head at the moon.
Cast off the root—
Shed your hide.
And throw down your foot like a hoof!”

Leviathan

She was bathing in a stream
When the red dragon seized her
With his talons and took her to his lair.
He set her on his belly
And reclined into the goblets and gold.
She lay still, barely breathing,
As he spoke to her in human tones.
She wrung her hands over
The gold plates of his body
Like she was playing the harp.
She found a soft spot on his nose.
She touched it with her finger.
He turned into a prince
And loved her.

Her sister was drying on a rock
When the black dragon seized her
With his talons and took her to his lair.
He set her on his belly
And reclined into the goblets and gold.
She lay still, barely breathing,
As he showed her his white shards
With a gleaming smile.
She wrung her hands over
The sharp spikes of his body
Like she was playing the piano.
She found a soft spot on his belly,
Under a loose shingle
Just beneath his navel.
She touched it with her finger
And he ate her.

Once a maiden caught a lizard,
Laid him on his back
And caressed his warm and tender underside.
His heartbeat quickened and his wings glistened.
Sometimes even dragons become butterflies.

Dreams

The fairy tale begins
I am running away
I have braided my hair
Shrunk and regressed
My arms are the dead weights of snakes
My body as stiff as a thorn
I jump into new clothes
Ride a white horse
Or kiss a frog on the nose
I enter a woods with growls
Animals of electric fur
And watchful owls
Something forces me to move
Strains my world like the sea
And doesn't always notice the flowers
Sometimes I pine for light
Wonder at the eyes playing over me
At fingers poking paper bodies
Like jelly beans
I am alive
Believe in me
Don't turn the page
Don't lock me into this dark book

The Pegasus

The black cat leaps onto frost-bitten leaves.
Simple foragers penetrate drab debris.
The chill assaults the pumpkins,
Shriveling dry each gothic grin.

But early snowflakes promise winter serenity,
Departing from the clouds,
Brandishing themselves like petals to the wind—
Softly—unlike meteors—without sound.

So too fall a few stray feathers
From the wings of the Pegasus—
More lovely than spring and all other creatures.
How could anybody not love its beauty?

Wishing Well

Ripples rise in the mirror.
Shadowy depths twinkle beneath enchanted stars.

Fingers tickle the surface,
Then concealment falls heavily like silence after peace,
Locking the mystery away.

Tears fall freely like rhyme
And splatter up,
Defeating time
If reflections wish for love.

The Journey

Peasant farmers plowing
Virgin soil
Sometimes discovered buried treasure
Or an underworld.

They visited such places permitted only by soul.
They found the hidden springs.
They heard the whispering of sprites, saying:
Flee from folly,
And keep love's secrets.

Reach out—
Taste it—
Revel in its delights,
For it quenches all thirsts.

Love belongs to everybody.

Cinderella Story

“As it was in the days of Noah,
So it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
For in the days before the flood,
People were eating and drinking,
Marrying and giving in marriage . . .” (Mat 24:37)

Cindy watches the excitement of the news.
The world will never be the same:
“All the God-mongers have vanished;
Aliens must have abducted them,”
Caesar explains.
“Now, every good you can buy just by scanning
Your hand or forehead with a Moleculator . . .”

Cindy shuts off the TV
And rotates in the love seat
Toward a lit fire place
With piles of greenbacks on the mantle,
Withdrawn fresh from the bank this morning.
As useless as three-leaved clovers
Or baskets of rotting fish—
She tosses them in the cinders.

Then Cindy remembers:
The 80's—chugging across the floors of dance halls,
Dancing rapturously till dawn—
Then came the 90's,
The affairs,
Her career in cosmetology—
The prestige spread like a blood stain.
She had all the time in the world to choose.
But “We're all going to Heaven when we die,”
She rationalized.

Now, with hair bleached blond as cream
And gothic black liner enhancing her eyes,
She listens to the radio:
“Caesar Christ' will soon be arriving
At the Phoenix Civics Center!”

Tonight she'll set out again.
This man could really be him.

The mischievous twitch—
The rebellious inclination—
At Petra,
Near the synagogues,
Among rotting parchments and scrolls,
Even on the shores of Lake Galilee,
The bible scholar couldn't shake
His desire for a visit.

Hard Rock Cafe Jerusalem

He sneaks from the dorm at night
And enters the Hard Rock Cafe
Like a mouse squeezing into a bag of catnip.
Music blares.
Cigarettes spot the darkness.
A black-eyed Egyptian rubs a tourist's back—
She screams.
An Arab, rich with all his oil,
Devours his hamburger.
The poet slumps drunkenly in his bar stool.
He pops croutons into his mouth,
Sprinkles pepper into a beer glass,
And scribbles poems onto napkins
Before inspiration fades.
The Bible scholar finds a seat.

Sip your punch.
Fix your eyes on the musician dashing onto the stage,
Clutching his bass like a speared salmon.
Take in the aroma of the dark
And let the curses roll of your
Back like soaked olives.
Listen to the heretic who enters screaming,
As if to free caged pigeons
Or rob the pious of silver coins.
Even now someone's turning the tables.

Cain

The Fall began
As an afterthought—
“Maybe I should taste this bitter fruit—
Pluck at the forbidden vine”—
The thought began in Eve’s mind
Then grew into binary plan
Like bubonic plague that can’t help spreading
As Eve shared the surprisingly delicious produce with Adam—
And she and he tossed away God’s will
Like an apple core or a melon rind.

No drizzle had ever dampened that garden—
Nothing could extinguish Love.
Afterwards, walking away in their scrappy animal skins,
They must have felt like dogs!

Cain’s path seemed even darker—
“Who will defend me from these strange new people?”
He must have thought.
“I am cursed by everyone I meet.
When I walk by they scowl and stop their chatter.
I am dangerous, they say.
They will not let me through the town’s barrier,
So I must keep traveling,
Hoping I can prove myself harmless,
Even advantageous . . .
Surely if I had God’s boon,
For God is fair.”

Saying,
“Here’s for a little luck, Cain—
You’re going to need it after murder.”

Hearing his bitter pleas,
And noting other men’s bloody ideas,
God granted him mercy—
Gave him a mark, like a four leaf clover,

Cain saw the fullness of the moon
And journeyed on,
Waiting for the sunrise.

Main Event

Two god-like gladiators clash,
Facing a test of courage.
Twenty something drops of sweat splash
From two weary faces.

Yet the crowd stands the malevolent event.
Fists strike,
As the century belies their dreams.

Torsos twist,
And leather-covered muscles rip.
Then the champ screams like Apollo,
But the other fellow fails
Beneath the final blow of his adversary.
The lions are summoned to devour him
As he faints beneath the armored hand
That's risen in victory—
Risen like the sun over dusky man,
Risen like a cross in a far away land,
Risen like a savior to redeem the damned.

Desperado

I am always disturbed by a dead
Horse's body—bloody head
And maggots writhing about its lips,
Guts slipped out behind it,
Passed out in its haunches with fever
After injury in a rampage.

I edge around the corpse,
Sliding my wagon around the mountain's
Narrow crevice.
From an Indian's height,
I must seem like a spider creeping along this trail.
Inside I howl for the lack of even a bit of saliva
To spit out of my mouth; my canteen's empty--
Run dry yesterday.
The slash across my cheek's dried up as well,
And I'm all but glad to be the only survivor
Of last's week's bloody ruckus.

That last war almost broke gravity!
Arrows and bullets pierced right through bodies.
Men fell off horses and crashed to the dust
To be trampled underfoot by horses—
Men, strung up by their necks, hung limp in the trees
Like smoked hams.
Chests crushed;
Teeth popped out of our heads!

Pretty Peggy and I should have stayed in Denver
With the showgirls kicking in the parlor
And the prostitutes upstairs screaming and cackling like witches
And the intoxicated whoremongers braying like donkeys
From evening until day break

While the missionaries gathered outside the brothel and prayed,
Finally gave up on us, then went home.
How exciting it was to look down each night and see more
Than just my bare bone!
Now that's real love, I thought.

Pretty Peggy and I paid for our room and board
By killing the hotel's roaches--
We roasted them with matches
And drowned them in beer glasses doused with whiskey!
Point is, Pretty Peggy and I found love in each other's arms,
Then moved westward with the pioneers.

Pretty Peggy and I found ecstasy each night
When the lights gave out
With just the two of us behind the white canvass—
Trying to get closer to each other,
Hoping the cloth would keep out bear,
And the horses stopped panting,
And the wolves howled,
And I turned toward Pretty Peggy and chuckled softly,
Knowing I'd finally become a man!

Our camp was as strong as the steel of Pennsylvania—
We could have gone as far west as California,
With the hope of gold.
Pretty Peggy could have born our children,
Because the weather was merciful and the locals peaceful—
Until somebody started causing problems.
Why couldn't I have listened to that itinerant minister?
Why couldn't I just remove my revolver
And let it drop to the ground?

Flower in the Sod

As it is, a simple lilac, tragically fragile
Yet unpretentious as straw, rock, or earth,
Rises like hope upon the sod.

Grasses interlock like poetic craft
Or the delineation of symbols in classic architecture
Around the yellow dandelions,
Eclectically composed in nature's patterns
Like those of simple four-square quilting.

Short-lived man enjoyed the sentimental—
Her substance between any given hours—
Humble as their sod house dugout,
Yet clothed with dignity.
He fashioned their lives with love poetry
And common sense—
Knowing the difference among women.
Poetry with grass and solid nature
Engineered their lives with transcendental laughter.

Byzantine cathedrals towered over the clover
Just as their love bridged the chasm of poverty.
Poetry laid down the cables of Love—
Magic and enchanting,
Never disturbing and never dull,
Serene with sincerity of desire!

Alone Like the Moon (a sonnet)

Alone like the moon that lights itself
Upon the distant hills of pine
These nights alone she finds herself
Without a hint of mirth or wine.

Her wretched plight could blind her eyes
Like wind that whisks the candle's flair.
The sullen clock keeps asking why
As if the empty rush of air would care

As if the open kitchen window
Would ever let the sunrise in.
And now as lonely as a willow
She pounds her broken heart again.

She does not hear one single echo.
She does not dare to ever let go.

Synchronicity

Madness prickles like a cactus.
Nature's junior flowers pop up like pun.
But spring won't amend the angry cymbals
Clanging through your head
Or the subtle hands of clocks
Swerving through sadness or time.

Motions and emotions
Swirl like wind-filled crops or oceans.
Cathedrals denounce your friends
And family with dong.

So you dash off abruptly like a rabbit
In swiftest run.
For the walls are crumbling
And the rivers invading,
Spilling—so suave—over their sides,
Dumping croaking frogs.

Your frenzied laughter chimes like clue.
Danger glooms in circles and angles—
The meaning very digital and against the manual.

Oh, such bittersweet synchronicity!
Hickory dickory dock!
You stop.
Yes, you stop!

Life Psychiatry

Streets between fences
Weed-filled grasses between tree stumps and dandelions
Rotten walls of houses between lawns and flower gardens
Indians between oceans and memories of pioneers
Even neighbor between neighbor
But just between you and I
And the places time fenced in
Let us remember how Love punctured fear
Like a nettle leaving holes
In days like pieces
Like tears
Before we grow old
We sometimes cut ourselves!

In the Beginning

At last the one-legged, Indian sun-gazer
Has finally lost his eye sight
But continues starring upwards,
Cross-legged in the dirt, meditating:

*Nothing ever interferes with time,
And nothing true ever changes.*

*We do everything
For nothing bad to ever happen,
But calamity always, somewhere, happens.*

*They would sell us strife,
If they would make any money
In the bargain.*

*We pay for a good fright,
And look for safety in the ending.*

In the beginning,
God moved upon the face of the waters,
And today God is with us still,
For the protesters have finished striking,
And no harm's been done—
Neither Santa nor the Ice Cream Man will hurt us.
The police say, "It's all right now; you can all go home."

Pakistan Daddy

I love delicious darkness
Eating the sunlight.

You toss yourself aside
Only to turn again
And wind around me
Like a snake,
Choking the apple of hate between us.
Though I feel fear
And my Pakistan Daddy vanishing,
Still I desire you.

I hear my Pakistan Daddy
And his tires shrieking
Around the corner.

I see my Pakistan Daddy
Treading through the hot night,
Wanting to throttle us.

I feel my Pakistan Daddy
Pounding the brick mortared walls of our intent,
And I am glad that we excluded him.

I know you cannot help yourself,
So I will not bear him anymore.

Close the curtains—
He is not so stupid anymore.

Breeding Bigfoot

He no longer looks healthy,
Just sweaty,
As if doused by 20 years
Of loneliness and isolation—
A great formula
For reproduction.

The scientists carry her in
Then leave
To watch behind the glass.

She too was captured
In Saskatchewan.
His brutish jaw
Emits a shrill—
He knows his kind.
His once-ignorant eyes now
Gleam shimmering recognition.
His dark nose,
Upturned and piggish,
Puckers and dimples
At her smell.
He smooths her fur
With leathery fingers.
She caresses his hair,
Exposing skin—
They forget about sin—
He wants more than a cuddle—
Those outside watch
While the captured couple.

Love Suits the Soul

Surprise! Surprise!
The French infidel Voltaire has crept
Into someone's private garden.
He has bounded the walls and into forever.
Voltaire takes the land,
And love takes the soul.

He strolls through the valley
And picks a rosy poppy, smelling deeply:
"This is for your softness, my darling love.
Thank you for letting me play
The bee and you the flower.
I have enjoyed unlocking your hidden fire—
Mapping you out in passionate desire—
Then back again, always the after-seeker.
So I hope love suits the soul.

"Let the wind do its best with nature—
Your laughter is more profound than breeze
And will resound in my mind forever.
I will not let the hours prattle with my energies,
For like a bee, I must soon be leaving—
As the time is fleeing.
But time is not what I am grappling with—
True love is, I suppose.
Maybe I should write something of the soul,
Something of the soul in love,
For I know it is true that love soothes the soul—
I have tasted of the vineyard,
And you have shown me so."

The First Musician

Searching for Love.
She received a trite word,
A glare, but no greeting.

Then she thought,
What if this tool I found
Could make a secret sound,
Simple as breath
And precious as the eyes of doves—
Then the villagers would give and ask
And never again just take.

So she raised the taut reed and blew—
Then, suave and pied,
She tied up wood and string
And twanged around.

The notes were solid sound.
They met the people square in their faces.
She sat down beneath a tree's shade
And became the teacher of melody
And possibility.

The girls and boys all gathered round
As she took them beyond life—
All matter lost shape and hue
As the intricate melodies grew.

The Model

Today I wear the latest style—
A perfect windblown desert mini.
Make-up creates my latest look:
Darkened eyebrows and lashes,
Nice-n-long-n-plumped-up with ebony mascara.
Violet-lilac eye-shadow shimmers!
Glossy slick protects my ripened lips, faintly sparkling.
My cheeks bones blush with a delicately blended crush of rose.
The modest hush of peach frost tips my fingernails—
An un-chipped French manicure.
Creamy base, natural-n-fresh as bee pollen, stays put
With pink-n-just a touch of gold—powder—
Sprinkled like pixie dust upon my forehead and nose—
Glitter sunscreen decoratively shields the flesh that I expose,
So I stay put, perfect in the sun.
I won't be undone
By endless hours of modeling.
I keep the beat,
Though the dust tickles my throat
And my body itches despite the cheap insect repellent—
I still smile and glow.
My subtle feet pitter-patter across the sandy foundation.
I press my fingers down upon my skirt's flighty ruffle.
My unwound nut-brown hair flows down smooth as honey
Across my snug body
And gushes out with the endless whipping of the wind.

I'm clean beyond dream and neat.
I laugh at the heat.
So let the cameras roll, boyz.
Let the photos be never-ending.
Let not one pose remain un-shot.
I'll keep my tact.
I lit a match, and it consumed me.

Convention

Oh how you squirm like trapped animals!
Above you looms the brute like stars smirking.
Sure, this president's loyal!
He bestows such grace as voices rushing
Shapeless words from a foolish smile—
Thoughts oozing out in phrases—
Laughter spewing suddenly
As we listen to him gasp,
Describing something “interesting.”

Charm chats and puffs, posturing—
Standing richly aft behind the podium,
Reliving his early career.

Dedicated to the state, or whatever,
He travels behind what happened
Then warms himself with the point,
As if the world were at his very table
And his every laugh a book.

His staff tends their minds to this man—
Listening, bemused and wondering,
Puzzling in scrutiny.
Later they will praise his insightful rambling
Though he tells nothing of love
Or even smart desire.

A soft light glows from the open door of the lavatory—
He won't trade you in for another team
Or succumb to a movie made in secret.
Do not show contempt or menace for him.
Another favored number joins the nation—
Another pretentious lecture ends.

Fish-N-Chips

Who can forget those bashful bachelors,
Waiting by the seafood market
For fresh fish and salty chips
As the cirrus clouds swirl
Through the heavens,
So debonair?
They jingle pocket change
As deep desire finds them dreaming.

Surely love is infinite!

Exquisite pleasures ripple their minds,
Enshrouding them in a peaceful net,
As tranquil mornings cover the oceans
After a stormy night.

They bridge their emptiness.
They long patiently
To spot a fresh fish
Till darkness eases across their minds,
Banishing them from their good intent.

Their faces do not show surprise.
The prostitute doesn't threaten them.

Surely love is infinite!

War and Peace

Even so
God laughs.
Wars tear souls,
But God picks us up like fallen cherry apples,
Touching our tiny spring politics,
Merrily holding his power like a bagel.

With better-than-nuclear love
We send death away like a mangy dog
And dump determined destruction out in the cold
To be picked at by the beggars.

Bombs can explode another day
If war crashes into us sickeningly,
And the last trumpets sound,
And geese and bear fall limp as pitas
And the unwholesomeness of inert energy
Radiates in insensitive abolition
With the rudeness of split atoms or days.

Some day, we will discover how beautiful peace is,
And assuredly,
Wholly forgiven.

Millennium New Year

Young soldiers and prostitutes
Mix in brothel art—
Outside remain the blood-stained battle fields,
Spoiled with tears—
The fate of these years.

Young soldiers gurgle and howl,
Spilling to the ground.
They abandon life
In passion or fear.
Now passes the year.

Young soldiers skirt another hill
Then whisk by the dark shoreline.
Outside the caves,
Vines meet the blue borderline.

Regret haunts the mountains
Of what could have been—
Chiseled with waters—
The river-ribbon glints and juts
As the ancient sea sparkles.

Coney Isle (full version)

Strawberry delicious lipstick meshes with your desire—
 Almonds and cream coat your marinated jowls—
 Honeymooners and doves appear off Coney Isle,
 Where rule-the-roost pirates once capsized
 Sea-sloppy sailors and sycophants.

Did corsets and petticoats mean to protect the damsels
 From the ruin of such octopi?
 Tearing apart underskirts,
 Those blood-stained wolves plundered and ravished
 With a Moorish aye-aye
 As whips lashed and revolvers flashed
 In the fustiness of brusque—
 As elegant as ammonia,
 Those ruffians pillaged pilots
 And left women as soft as fresh-baked bread
 As desolate as hydras!

But today a marine just whistles.
 Glancing at the damsel,
 Who seems so lonely there.

He patrols his sickened brain like a wizard
 And admires the diesel lances upon the guard.
 He scrutinizes Woodwind Elms in furry at the enemy,
 Past sections of coast with aluminum valves—
 But within the icy limber—electric cocoons
 And the rush of running water through hydraulic canals.
 Now the glorious orders of his superior
 Become subtle falsification in sublimated sanctuary,
 Like algorithms tackling the air as if a disembodied head would fall,
 Mocking the white gloves that look like something borrowed from his sister!

Somewhere else,
Along the stained glass and cobblestones, a tour begins.
Somewhere else,
A scholar studies Algonquin.
Somewhere else,
Hares spot the wilderness like bathroom urinals.
Somewhere else,
A soldier's feeling virginal.
Somewhere else,
A strike-it-go-lucky Yankee sheds his alpaca britches
And takes a furtive pee.

God Save Us All Anna L. Cafes

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