



...from

# Euclid Creek: A Journey

Michael Ceraolo

Down in the Dirt

2004 poetry chapbook

And next  
came the mystery  
of the science-fiction past  
of the early eons of the earth,  
an inhospitable,  
atmosphereless,  
lifeless place  
scarier than any movie ever made,  
experiencing the true fury of aerial bombardment  
as asteroids and other astral material  
kept crashing to earth,  
experiencing heat hot enough  
to melt the pelting iron  
and send it

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to the still-solid center of the earth,  
the volcanic activity  
made of magma rather than water,  
the resulting fires-

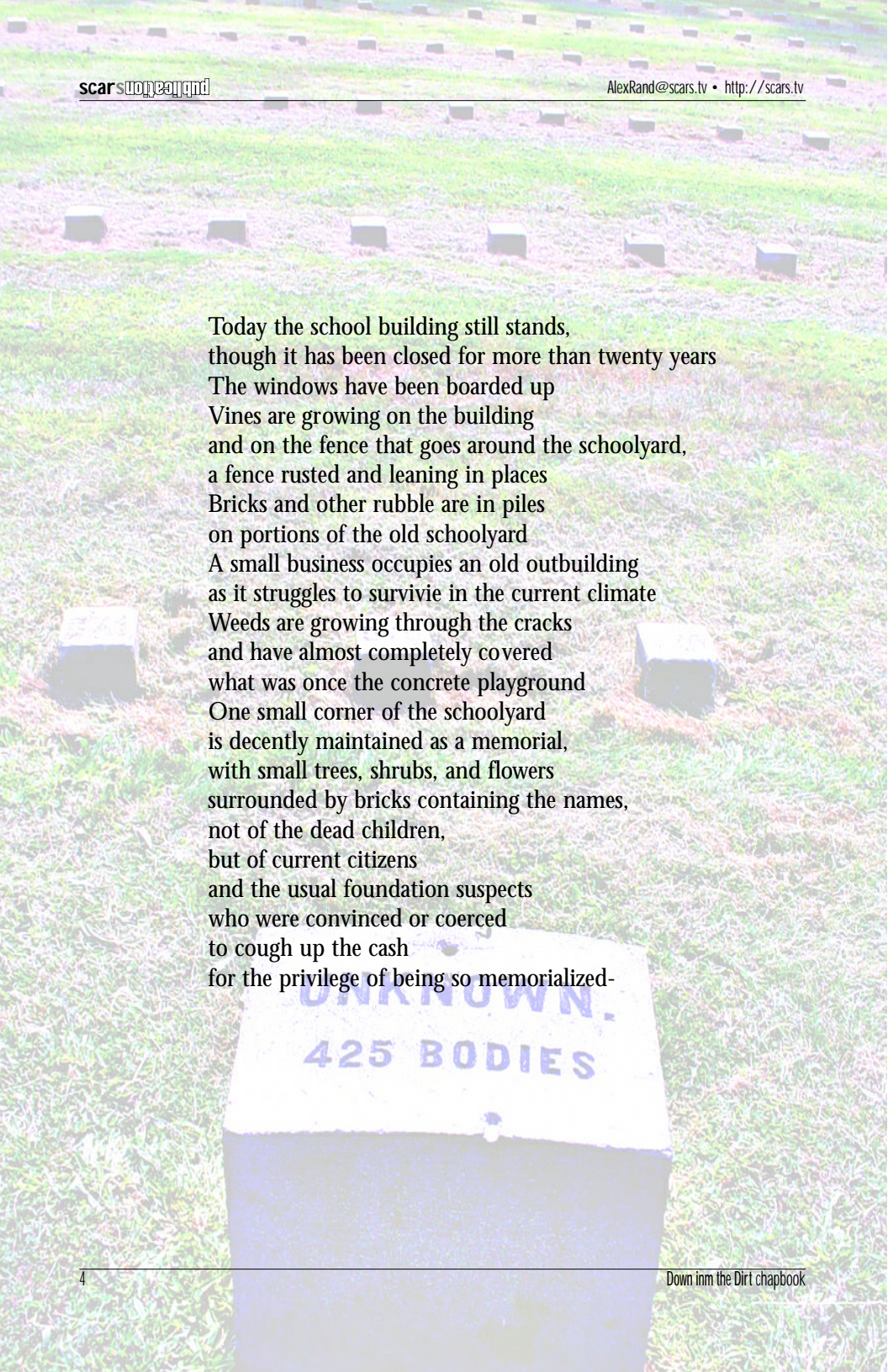
experiencing  
that created oceans  
experiencing

March 4, 1908.

To the northeast of the city  
in the village of Collinwood,  
a name that would later be retained  
as that of the neighborhood  
when the village was eaten by the city,  
three hundred sixty-six students  
were being taught a daily lesson  
in misplaced civic boosterism  
in attending the misnamed Lake View School,  
for only eagles could view the lake  
from that particular vantage point

The steam pipes coming from the boiler  
were working hard to ward off the winter chill  
when one of the pipes overheated  
The pipes being inexplicably  
in contact with the wooden joists  
started the deadliest school fire  
in the history of the United States  
Almost half the school's students,  
one hundred seventy-two to be exact,  
along with two teachers and one rescuer,  
died in the fire

Almost immediately  
rumors circulated concerning  
the cause of the high death toll,  
blaming the builders and architects  
for fatal flaws in the school's design  
But those politically-connected pillars  
had nothing to fear liability-wise,  
for the coroner came riding to the rescue,  
issuing a report on his inquest  
that placed the blame on the children  
for unwisely panicking in the situation



Today the school building still stands,  
though it has been closed for more than twenty years  
The windows have been boarded up  
Vines are growing on the building  
and on the fence that goes around the schoolyard,  
a fence rusted and leaning in places  
Bricks and other rubble are in piles  
on portions of the old schoolyard  
A small business occupies an old outbuilding  
as it struggles to survive in the current climate  
Weeds are growing through the cracks  
and have almost completely covered  
what was once the concrete playground  
One small corner of the schoolyard  
is decently maintained as a memorial,  
with small trees, shrubs, and flowers  
surrounded by bricks containing the names,  
not of the dead children,  
but of current citizens  
and the usual foundation suspects  
who were convinced or coerced  
to cough up the cash  
for the privilege of being so memorialized-

over the next several hundred million years  
the water and carbon imprisoned inside  
being freed after serving their sentences  
and the invading material  
being escorted to the surface  
and post-release by volcanic spurts  
forming an atmosphere and oceans  
and made of water  
experiencing the ultimate  
(at least for this planet) in greenhouse effect

And  
the history of the early land  
thus created  
remains another  
mystery,  
because it occurred  
prior to the writing  
of the earliest-known volumes  
in the library of rock,  
and  
even the language  
of those earliest volumes  
was not deciphered  
until the twentieth century--

...from  
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published in conjunction with

*down in the dirt*

the magazine revealing all your dirty little secrets

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ISSN 1068-5154

IMAGES (FRONT TO BACK):

page 1: river in Cuolder, Colorado.

page 2: National Park rock formation, Utah.

page 3: Building under repair, Luxembourg.

page 4: Gettysburg War Memorial, Pennsylvania.

page 5: Hot Springs, Wyoming.

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*Freedom & Strength* Press 

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