

Jeff Bagato

We May Cry Atlantis

We may cry Atlantis,
dreaming of a pure
city on a hill
that no road
or prayer can reach,

a time of jungles shining
in the sun like the old
cities trees and lianas
currently conceal

Buried here for centuries,
a tribe goes naked
but for a few feathers
bound to them by leather
ties,

blowing
the snuff of hallucination
into each other's heads,
then staggering
through the hours

A great jeep burns
across the underbrush;
crushed on a megalith,
it reveals a home
of ancients gone—
that place
where lies and bigotry

found favor, and gold
 called its people
to their prayers

 Sunlight hits
these stones and the gilt
 don't shine so pretty
anymore, like
 a wart on the eye,
 like a lesion
on the lip of a would-be
 Don Juan, up
from the gutter
 for the courting of a
 queen

 These days we picture
ourselves polishing
 such jewels, all
 broken and less
wanted than ever
 before, wishing
 for a genie who
never quite appears

Reporting from Oz

Your newscaster holds
a gun to his head
and says
gitmo,
gaza, & ghraib,
oh my

Yellow brick road
like a rug pulled out
from under your feet—
whatever a wiz there was there
never was
a wizard
in Oz

Flying monkeys in banker suits,
their power ties so red, red, red,
swoop down upon those
unexpected little men,
freely giving wedgies
left and right,
instead of safe
returns

If you can catch
one by the tie,
you can fling him like a kite
crashing to earth

This isn't a fable based on Baum,
though the tin
man could play
an assembly line robot
stuck in mid hack

Watch the lion act CEO
of some salmonella industry
too cowardly to admit
the taint

While the man of straw
stands tall, a wicker giant
holding up the sky
& set aflame, chanting
ranters bellowing spells of cash,
magic beans, & gold
floss spun out
of the hay

Now, as the smoke
rises, and the heat rises,
and the fire rises, biting deep
into the drumstick,
the brisket,
the ham,
comes a scream from within—

oh lord,
oh wizard,
oh guru,
oh priest—

a scream
from
within

First Dispatch

The roar of the king
 could be farts;
 an edict invisible but clouded
by offal and the waste
 of a mind

The ego's now
can only hear a joke told backwards—
the life of a fact is short;
 just watch the tall tale
 dancing in broken wind, a few words
 thumbed and smeary
below a pixilated hash:

 one truth
 added to another,
yielding a new lie also seeming true;
the parts cannot be un-wholed,
 so fantasy enters our
 plane of the real

Of course, some
of these pictograms,
 hieroglyphs and alphabets
have been chiseled
 in stone;

once their remote pulses
 regain the quantum flow—
a monument to no mind,
 a memorial
 cast in dry sand—

 these people
 can return to eating dust
before long sleepiness
 takes their souls
 to bed

Meet this great beast
filled with days all empty,
a gold mine of me me me
guided thither and yon
by invisible bleating:

maps that speak
prove false gods;
guides use pictures to swing a vote;
tie some emotion to a rumor
and it weighs heavy, sucking
oxygen away
from the otherwise
real

Make bones surrender
to your will, bend
away contrary to their purpose,
crack and break and yet
not shout nor feel
the cold pain of truth

Our stand starts now,
on this ground, on these limbs—
these foundation stones
perhaps eroded by the common tides;
scratch your principles
here and maybe they too
will last

Give a resting place
to needs gone down
in hope of something better;
a wishful cemetery
where all brave dreams
prepare to die