

# Two Poems

By [Kenneth Francis](#) (August 2018)



*Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*, Giorgio de Chirico, 1914

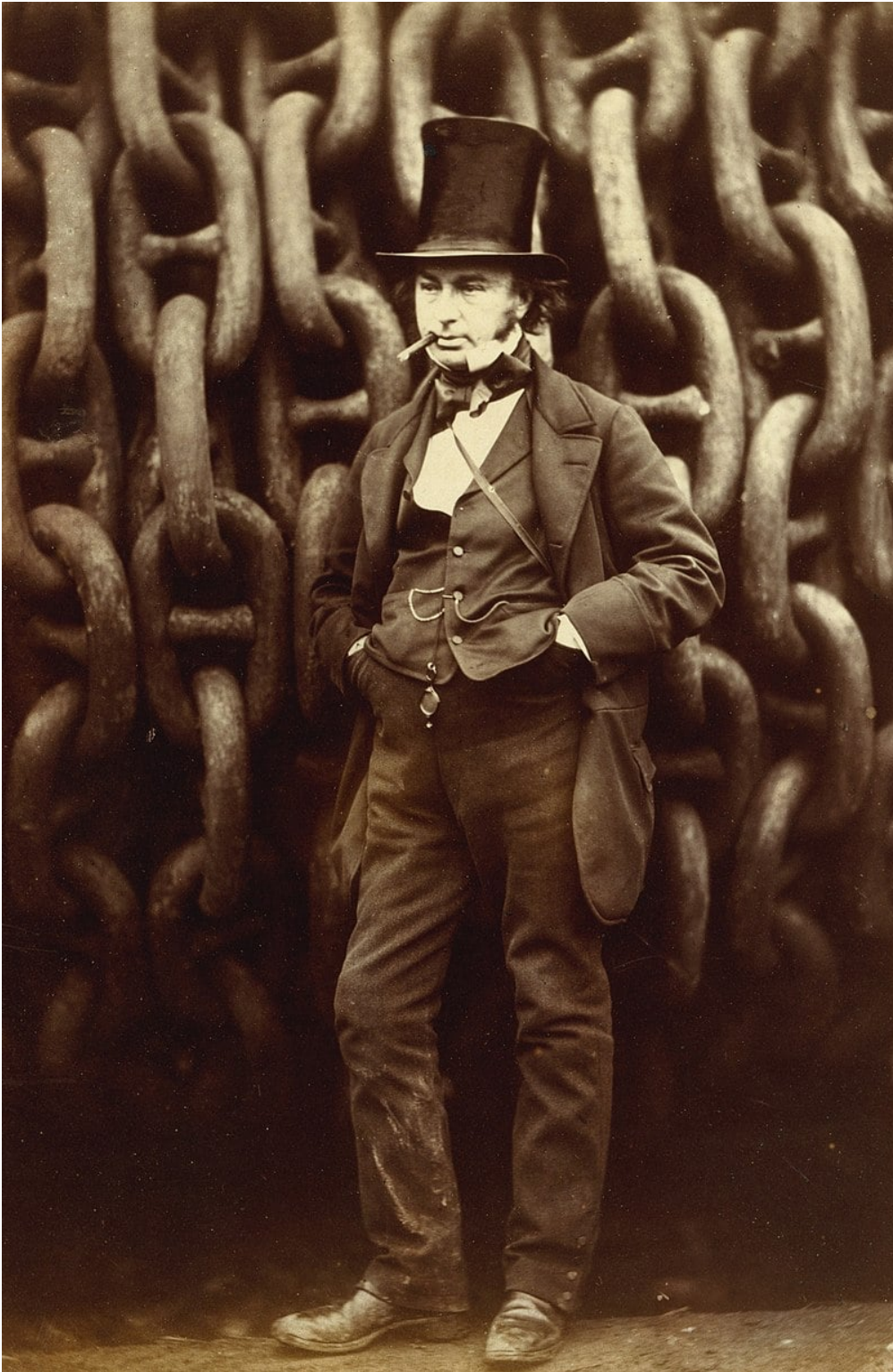
## Screaming Popes and Sacred Monsters

Out on the empty piazza, a young girl

With wispy hair trailing behind her in the wind

Runs while pushing a hoop with a little stick  
Down Melancholy Street at midnight; her long  
Skinny shadow jogging behind her into the  
Square past an open wagon door where  
Evil men with nets might hide; or a stick  
Insect roped in bondage dangling  
At the end of string tied to crossed fingers  
On a faded-green fence; like a circus lady's  
Long legs tensely walking on the tightrope  
Or a burning giraffe standing still in the twilight  
Hour under a deep aqua sky; or a darkly lit  
House in an empire of light where bowler-hat  
Men float in the clouds and locomotives roll  
Out of fireplaces; or a place where Celebes  
Elephants with sticky bottom Grease pray  
For wounded Papa and the Nervous  
Grandmamas of Sumatra. These oils  
On canvas can melt time in the deserts of  
Salvador's sinister skull; unlike a courtyard  
Where a Greek stone head is rubber-gloved  
To the disgust of Disquieting Muses dressed  
Like papal urinals drawing long shadows on

Ancient red towers near a hill where a statue  
Like Pegasus stands on a plinth  
While way out West in the wet streets of Soho,  
Screaming popes hang in dark studios where  
Sacred monsters once hung out in sleazy bars.  
What is it about these misfits whose illogical  
Brushstrokes amuse us? Were they unwitting  
Agitprop provocateurs for the Masters of the  
Universe? Their dark souls never longed for  
The Host but instead remained atoms lost in the  
Shadows of the underworld; or are their images  
Nothing more than the emperor's new tosh?  
Picasso has a lot to answer to—or was it Bosch?



## Isambard Kingdom Brunel

He wears an eight-inch stovepipe hat

Upon his head; a five-feet-one-inch giant

Resembling a mini-Bill Sykes,

His name is Isambard Kingdom Brunel  
See the monster chains hanging behind him  
With links the size of Atlas' globe  
Ready to launch the SS Great Eastern  
Into the cruel sea; but it's not all ocean:  
'Go up to the mountain', he commanded  
And they quarried huge rocks and timber  
To lay the foundations for the Great  
Western dream of travel and adventure  
Burrowing for miles under Britannia's rivers,  
mountains and valleys, to a place where  
Thomas the Tank Engine meets Ben Hur:  
Suspension bridges ushering trains on  
Rail-lines that stood the test of time  
Tracks that would never bring a train to  
Halt at the drop of autumn leaves or an  
Average build-up of winter snow  
If he's not in Heaven, is he building  
Railroads out of Hell? Whatever the case:  
Raise a glass to Isambard Kingdom Brunel!

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Kenneth Francis is a Contributing Editor at *New English Review*. For the past 20 years, he has worked as an editor in various publications, as well as a university lecturer in journalism. He also holds an MA in Theology and is the author of [The Little Book of God, Mind, Cosmos and Truth](#) (St Pauls Publishing).

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