

Two Poems

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



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

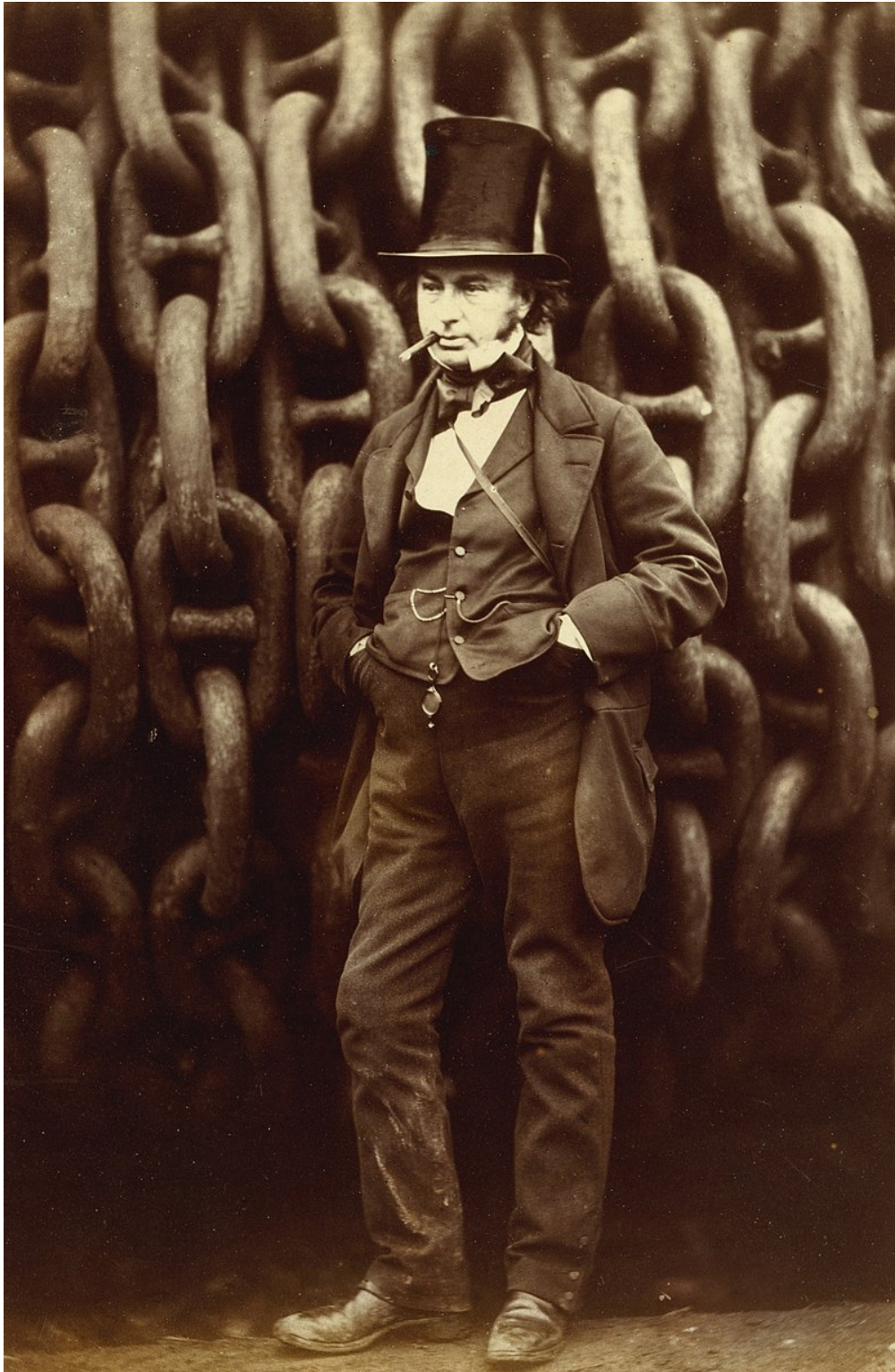
Screaming Popes and Sacred Monsters

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!

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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