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VOLUME 22

SPRING, 1988

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The Agora was essentially the plenary assembly where all the laoi gathered, all the citizens in the town, all the warriors in the camp, in short "The whole mass of those who had no place in the Council."

—G. Glotz
The Greek City

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(Cover by Schell Simpson)

SNAKE MOTHER

In frosty childhood
warm coats were like
food in our stomachs,
the sun in the firmament—
Mother spent decades
keeping kids coated,
like a stove fanning warmth
on our heedless backs.

Even now, every March
a plane brings Mother
down from the ice
into spring
Still wrapped in woolen tweed.

In April
she wings back North,
her seasonal flight
in swallow-blue linen,
Leaving her new coat,
like a snake
shedding its skin—
woven wide enough
to wrap her offspring in.

—Jean S. Moore

WALKERS

That September I walked on the earth on the south side of Paris Mountain. Aunt Lena said that if I walked on that side in the morning when the sun was shining, my lungs would turn blue again and by the end of October my legs might be sturdy enough to climb the rocks behind her house with my cousin Peter. Then I'd be able to see where their creek started from. At first I didn't believe her, because the rocks went almost straight up, and Peter had been climbing them all his life. He was two and a half inches taller than me when he was thirteen, and had been growing for two years since then. But he said he thought I could, and we secretly scheduled the hike for the beginning rather than the end of October.

So, I walked as far as I could every morning down the path behind the garden, into the woods along the creek. When my legs started getting sore, I would stop to rest then walk back to the house. These mornings by myself, when a wet green leaf touching my arm would make me laugh, the woods became the quiet, confident friend I needed to lead me away from my doubts about recuperating. Every day I walked through more difficult areas until I learned all the south side of Paris Mountain, even the deep thickets and tangles of honeysuckle.

In the afternoons, when Peter came home from football practice, I'd sit on the bed we were sharing while he did sit-ups in front of the mirror and asked me how far down I'd walked, or if they needed to worry about someday dragging my collapsed corpse back up the mountain. He seemed generally assured of my progress, which pleased me since I didn't want him to think that I had any doubts about our approaching expedition. At night when he slept, I would look at how easily he breathed, and how the muscles in his back and chest worked even as he rested. Next to him the smoothness of my stomach felt boyishly ungrown, the muscles pale and thin. Finally, on the first Saturday in October, he stood naked by the dresser and played a reveille on his trumpet to wake me up.

"Your oatmeal's cold." He grabbed one of my legs and twisted me over. "My mom already left for Winchester. She said you walked all the way down to the end of the creek yesterday."

"I did," I said, kicking loose. "Plus I did sixty sit-ups, no stopping. I'm recuperating like crazy. I even did ten laps in the bathtub last night."

He sat down beside me and poked around my knee. "Yes, mister Michigan rabbit, those are very sturdy legs. I figured after all the work I've done to bring you to the height of physical perfection—or at least away from the dregs of skin and bones, you'd run off and leave me here again, a hundred

miles from civilization." He stared out the window as though the trees outside had become bars. He lived where I always thought I would live, if given the chance: he did the things I always wanted to do, and with a strength as beautiful as it was hard. Yet, I guessed that when he was alone, his trophies and his home in the woods did little to help him slow down and enjoy himself. "But," he stood up, pulling the covers off me completely, "I bet you can't go UP the mountain yet."

Cold oatmeal is pretty lousy mountain climber fuel, but I was dressed and outside before Peter had his boots on. Even though I'd studied the craggy cliff almost every day since the end of August, that morning it jutted up so high I had to take a long breath to make my lungs feel extra blue. Peter climbed behind me, and rested with me when I got tired. In a few places, I could see strings of water where parts of the creek escaped and fell off the rocks, then landed in little pools and ran back into the woods. Peter pointed out some scrubs to hold onto when it got steep, although usually I made my way respectfully. Once the water dropped about eight feet, but I couldn't watch it for very long or I might have dropped too.

But all along, I was waiting for the top. I had never been to the beginning of a creek, but I knew that they started from springs, and a spring sounded like just the sort of thing I needed to see to inspire my blood into a final, healthy flow. As the rocks became smaller and I climbed faster, the woods grew less and less quiet. I heard a wash of water rubbing against smooth rocks. Peter grinned when he got there and saw me slouching over the river. "It's the same river," I said. He didn't get it. "It's the same river that's at the bottom of the creek."

"I don't know," he answered. "I never went all the way down there. I just hate to have to walk uphill to get back."

It was just a little creek that really went nowhere, and two and a half inches aren't many inches, but after walking on the south side of the mountain, I think I somehow managed to recuperate.

—Paul Shepherd



BABBLE WITH FRITZ

—Schell Simpson

INVADERS

The first threat was a birthday-wrapped package with a dead squirrel in it. The form of this threat stemmed from a false assumption that Packard, being Louisiana-born, might associate a dead squirrel in a box with some powerful, irresistible Southern magic. Packard, having lived in the North for the last twenty years, was merely perplexed as to why anyone would want to hurt an innocent, defenseless animal. The motive, however, was made clear by the note, being the common, usual demand for money.

"Money for revolt!" specified Cooper. "If we waste it away again, or pretend we can revolt *without* money, we're all just claptrapping again, falling back on the smug comfort of our idealism!"

Cooper often spouted forth in this way. He sounded funny, but the others were grateful for him. He was the one who always kept things rolling, and it was he who had conceived the Packard Plan, ordering Danny to give up the squirrel he'd shot for dinner in the first brainstormed installment of the plan.

As practical as the group's goals may have been, the whole scheme initially had the air of a prank, which is exactly how Packard treated it. The note went unanswered; the money was not delivered.

The second threat Packard recognized from his voluminous studies in American history. The symbol of the Black Hand had once been splurged prominently in Louisiana history, but its origin was of a more immediately ominous tone.

"The Mafia is after me!" Packard confided to Father Xavier. "The Sicilian faction," he added learnedly.

"You know there is no choice as to what you must do," Packard's friend told him. "If you bow down to these villains in the interest of protecting your own safety and livelihood, you establish such crimes to be profitable, and, thereby, open the way to the hazarding of others."

Father Xavier was big-winded, but Packard could only thank him for his support. Nevertheless, Packard still had the right to be bitter.

"I feel like Issac," Packard muttered.

Once again, Cooper's man went out into the cold to follow their leader's elaborate directions for safely retrieving the drop-off, and, once again, came back with nothing. This time, however, a police set-up was spotted. If his men's patriotic fervor was ebbing in the fruitlessness of two failed plans, at least they had his precautions to thank for not being caught.

"One thing is certain," Cooper told his men. "He's taking us seriously now."

Cooper moved his men away from watching the Packard estate and sent them to surveil various friends and relatives of Packard. Danny's diligence in following Packard's daughter Melissa resulted in Installment Three of the plan, one which Cooper knew Packard could not possibly reject. Melissa, a delicately shy young boarding student, had fallen painfully lonely while being away from the security of her family and had found comfort in a somewhat unnatural relationship with an older female student whom Danny would only describe as "vulturous." Cooper flew up to the school and, using the group's last bit of funds, came to an agree-

ment with the older girl whereby a secret photo-session was set up. This time, in lieu of a note, Cooper called Packard directly.

"You are an ANIMAL!"

"Yes? . . ." said Cooper, smiling.

"And, and, . . . you're not getting anything!"

Packard slammed the phone to its cradle, leaving Cooper astonished.

"You've done what is right," comforted Father Xavier.

"Yes," said Packard, shaking, "And now I feel like Abraham!"

"He is a moral man," Danny said. "We ought to just admit we lost and burn up the negatives."

"He is *not* moral!" Cooper screamed. "He is rich! Don't you see a contradiction there? As long as people are starving, and he's sitting on the money to help them, he is *not* moral! And those people are continuing to starve as we sit here doing nothing about it! Be sure, however, that I'm sending off those negatives!"

"But we'll never be able to get anything out of him!"

"Oh, don't be so sure of that," said Cooper, his face twisting into a thoughtful smile. "He'd never be able to do it twice."

"Twice! . . . He's done it three times!" Danny said. But then he noticed that Cooper was still smiling.

Packard had pulled Melissa home from school and brought her into a nest of highly-paid security personnel. Outside the estate, police watched all day and night, as their investigators kept similar hours shaking up the underworld in search of leads, still trying to find the Sicilian connection. Apprehension spread through Cooper's camp until only Cooper and Danny remained to come up with Installment Four. Cooper finally discovered it using Danny's telescopic sight to keep tabs on the estate's back entrance.

"There's *always* a way!" Cooper beamed.

The tacky new economy car of Packard's morning bedding supervisor was blessed with impregnably dark tinted windows. Cooper and Danny tailed the woman home, braking into her car before dawn and situating themselves in the back seat. When she re-entered her car at sunup, Cooper persuaded her to cooperate with Danny's newly sawed-off hunting rifle. The woman was extremely helpful, not only getting them past the rear gate and into the garage, but so terrified that she volunteered all that the two would need to know in locating Melissa. Being a long-time employee, the woman still had the keys to an older, locked-off service entrance which led the group straight to Melissa's door.

"Good morning!" the guard at the door said pleasantly. Danny's gun ensured similar cooperation and the four entered the room in harmony, but Melissa, upon realizing the situation, was fearless in her desire for revenge of her humiliation and her father's torment and had to be subdued by Danny's powerful grip. After gagging the girl tightly and knocking out the guard, Cooper led the group back to the car, and with the woman's creative excuse of having forgotten her medicine, they soon cleared the rear gate.

The kidnapping was followed by a huge shake-down of the organized crime empire, as well as intensive interrogation of the guard and the bedding supervisor.

both secretly placed under constant surveillance. The car was found, spotless, and since the descriptions of the men conflicted, no more headway was made. After a week, Cooper dialed Packard's number. Danny softly untied the gag Cooper made the girl wear almost constantly.

"Hello, Father," Melissa said, crying softly. "It's me."

"Melissa! Thank God!" said Packard's friend. "Let me talk to your captor, dear."

"Let me talk to my father!"

"He says he loves you, Melissa, but I can't get him to the phone. Don't worry. We've come to a responsible decision together, but he's letting me handle things now." In the background Packard was sobbing uncontrollably.

Cooper grabbed the phone. "Listening? . . . Here's the plan. . ."

"Not only is Melissa Mr. Packard's daughter," said Father Xavier, "but she is your sister under God."

"Are you listening?" Cooper yelled.

"Don't hurt the child." The line went dead. Melissa had to be brought back to her room, hysterical.

When Danny returned, Cooper said, "Kill her!"

"What?" Danny said. "It's not her fault!"

"She's rich! Kill her!"

Danny picked up his gun and hid it under his jacket. He calmed Melissa down and brought her back out.

"We're letting you go," said Cooper, giving the girl a smile. She looked into his eyes incredulously, seeing the truth in their coldness. She fought wildly, but Danny's strong arms held her down and she soon gave up and lost consciousness. Danny carried her out to his car and drove off.

When Melissa awoke, Danny was untying her. She recognized the large, dark shapes of homes in her neighborhood. Danny untied her hands last.

"You can go home now," Danny said. "Go tell your father it's all over."

She backed away from him. He smiled, shamefully almost. She turned and ran, expecting every step a shot to pierce her back, but none came. Danny watched her disappear, and then got in his car and headed west.

A week after the happy reunion, Cooper sold his old car and bought a gun. Security on the Packard estate was minimal, and he easily cleared the fence. He had to knock unconscious a kitchen helper to get past him to an open side door, but he made his way unseen to Packard's softly lit study.

Father Xavier looked up in amazement as Cooper leveled his gun at him, but then Packard slowly lifted his head and turned to stare at him. His face was pale, looking entirely too old, but his eyes were of the dead, filmy and gray, and completely empty of any acknowledgement of Cooper's presence. Father Xavier glared at Cooper, smiling as though he were reading right through him. Cooper put the gun to Packard's head and fired.

"Happy?" he asked the priest.

"Are you?"

Cooper threw down the gun and ran outside, running on into obscurity.

—Robert Genadio

7 JEFFERSON'S LAWN

(University of Virginia, 1986)

At one end, Homer sits
disconsolate, pondering
the American Education
system, a stone child
at his knee. To the side,
Thomas, of course, slumps
in cold revolt, appalled
at the endless file of Tories
slouching past. At the other,
a team of accountants thrashes
the life out of Sigma Chi
in an interminable game
of rugby. Somewhere between
then and now the sense seems
to have been lost of why we
have gathered here, well
heeled, to be sure, beneath
these ancient oaks. What once
was a goal seems a waystation
at best, a place to play out
the remnants of childhood
before the glands go dry.
Yet the perfect shadows still
bisect the perfect walks and walls.
The pavilions seem to echo still
the voices of ruder days when
the future was somehow real.
Here ideas were once alive and
lie still in the dust beneath
our heels. If this no longer
matters, that is just our doing
as we move on to our smaller
less considered destinations.

—Russell Fowler

AT THE SITE OF OUR FORMER COLLEGE

Mesmerized by the vaulted free-way
that erased the veterans' housing,
We disagree
on where the dorms were placed
in relation to the
long-gone gym and cancelled library.
Alien condos
crowding a giant medical complex
solidly lie to us as if to say,
"we've always been here."
They weren't. But what was?

Like a Lost Colony
the college has vanished,
migrating on whim or need
to a greener campus,
changing its name
as if to conceal an indiscretion.
Has it left no trace?
These roadways perhaps,
and sidewalks
promise to lead to familiar destinations,
yet even the verges' grass-blades
turn away,
unfriendly and foreign.
Where are we?

The baffling geometry
of the skyline
makes us shocked strangers
on our ancient turf:
until at last we come upon
the Sherman Oak,
towering unmoved
behind upstart apartments—
still compass needle
pointing the directions
for our re-created reality.

—Jean S. Moore

DEATH AND RESPONSIBILITY IN *HAMLET*

There is, it would seem, an obvious reason why death is such an overwhelming theme in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: after all, *Hamlet* is a Shakespearean tragedy, and death is usually prevalent as the worst of disasters in all of Shakespeare's tragedies. One can, however, look beneath the surface of this comment and examine the phenomenon of death from the point of view of Hamlet, a young prince who first is faced with the reality of death, and then later comes to know death in all of its aspects. In the deaths of his loved ones and through the contemplation and acceptance of his own death, Hamlet matures in his understanding not only of the value of death in life but also of the relationship between death and responsibility. As Hamlet begins to recognize death for what it is (as he is further exposed to its many aspects), and as his responsibilities grow in the land of the living, he increases in wisdom from a young man who is melancholy and suicidal to one who has accepted death for what it is and is ready and accepting of its inevitability. In this maturing process, Hamlet's views of death and his continual realization of its implications and importance are revealed.

Hamlet's first real contact with death comes with the demise of his father, Old Hamlet. At this point, Hamlet does not know of the involvement of any foul play; he is merely deeply melancholy at the death of his beloved father, a melancholy compounded by the hasty marriage of this mother to his uncle Claudius. This dark mood is noticed and remarked upon by both Claudius and Gertrude:

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust. (I.ii. 68-71)

For Hamlet, however, this seemingly double tragedy causes him such despair of the good in life that he contemplates death from a new perspective—his own potential suicide:

O, that this too too sullied flesh could melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! (I.ii. 129-32)

The world has become weary and dull to Hamlet; he sees no value in it, but views it only as a burden, as something to be shunned rather than sought after or clung to. As he later reveals to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the world to him is a prison, a "sterile promontory" (II. ii. 10), which appears to him foul and evil, full of cruelty and void of any delight. As he can find no enjoyment in life, death becomes for Hamlet a respite from the weariness and pain of life rather than the tragedy it was when it took his father. His greatest wish is that death free him from the respon-

sibility of living in and dealing with the world.

This begins to change for Hamlet when, at last, he comes to meet his father's ghost and is made aware that treachery may have been involved in his death. This prompts him, though still in despair, to make some attempt to discover the accuracy of the ghost's accusations, and thus his own death becomes even less of a possibility for him (for one must necessarily live to act). It is at this point in his education that he comes face-to-face with the horror of death and is first introduced to the horrors which may lie beyond it. His father's revelations concerning the wretchedness and despair of his unforgiven spirit bring Hamlet to begin considering whether death truly is the end-all of pain and misery.

Being made aware of the ghost's experience, Hamlet meets yet another aspect of death which he must deal with and which is to cause him great confusion and indecision—the possibility of murdering someone himself. Hamlet's father has asked him to take revenge on Claudius, to bear not his nature, and to rid Denmark of a bloodied ruler. While at first Hamlet is horrified enough to consider, and indeed seems ready enough to commit such a deed, his actions and some key words indicate a hesitation to this commitment. Immediately after seeing the ghost, Hamlet states that he will go to pray, indicating that he has need, at least, of some heavenly counsel. Furthermore, he is not at all pleased with the prospect of murder, given his immediate vigor, as he curses the day he "was born to set it right" (I.v. 190), therefore, at this time, bringing death to others is not something which Hamlet seems freely willing to do. Not only does he hesitate to commit murder, but he is not so sure now that death is still the best aspect of life.

It is following this point of indecision that Hamlet directly wrestles with his understandings of death and responsibility. Hamlet has been prompted to act; he has been put in the position for the first time of having the burden not simply to be but to take a stance according to that being. In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet contemplates life and death, and again comes to the conclusion that death is indeed the more desirable of the two, for he likens it unto a gentle sleep and a peaceful respite from the troubles of the world. He adds a new dimension, however, one which was not present before, and this is the unknown mystery which surrounds death and which shrouds what is beyond it from mortal eyes. Hamlet has come closer to it than most mortal men, for he has seen his father's ghost and has become aware that the pain does not necessarily end with the end of life. There is more to death than "to sleep," and that is "to dream," the consequence of sleep. While he knows the situations he must face and the decisions he must make in this life, he does not know what horrors or difficulties lie beyond death. As a consequence of this frightening consideration, Hamlet comes to be aware of choices in life, as opposed to simply the choice "to live," and it is now with this that he is concerned. He must take a stance, whether the stance be one of sufferance or of retaliation, and he must act in this life:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? (III.i. 51-60)

Therefore it is with this realization that death begins to truly reveal itself to Hamlet, and he can begin to see it for what it is rather than for what he had hoped it might be in his ignorance and irresponsibility.

From this point on Hamlet begins to overcome the mystique of death and to wrestle instead with his own stance in life. He is confronted with the chance to kill the king as he goes to visit his mother, but is thwarted in the attempt by the fact that the king is praying. Taking into account his father's fate and his own self-realizations about death and its mysteries, he is not willing to kill Claudius if it is possible that he will be rewarded with eternal rest because he had a chance to repent. Yet kill he does, for when in his mother's closet Hamlet mistakenly murders Polonius, assuming him to be the king. Though he admittedly commits the act in a state of anger, and does repent of the deed, still there is neither horror nor fear in his countenance, but merely regret and a bitter humor concerning the mistake and the fact that he must now get rid of the body somehow. Death has lost much of its horror and mystery now, and he looks on it with an almost despising attitude, as evidence when he is speaking with the king concerning Polonius' whereabouts:

Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all
creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for
maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but
variable services—two dishes but to one table. That's
the end. (IV.ii. 22-26)

Death levels all men to the same stature: one's office in life will not matter one whit when death calls, and as ambitious as a man may be in life, his end will be the same as that of the lowly beggar who has none. Hamlet laughs more perhaps at ambitious or foolish men who seek to somehow escape death by their ambition than death itself. At any rate, Hamlet's contemplation of this realization comes to a culmination in the graveyard scene, where man in all his final glory lies exposed for Hamlet to consider.

While in the churchyard, Hamlet and Horatio come across a gravedigger who, to Hamlet's surprise, sings while he digs. In the midst of the digging, as skulls are exposed, Hamlet begins to muse on the identities of the remains. As he continues to fantasize, Hamlet comes to the realization that here is where all men will finally rest, and neither ambition, despair, intelligence, nor ignorance will keep them from it, for he says:

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' th'
earth? . . . And smelt so? Pah! . . . To what base uses
may we return, Horatio! (V.i. 218-19; 221; 223)

Reality has finally surfaced for Hamlet. Death has found its rightful place in life for him, or rather, life has found its value in death. Hamlet has found that death is not the end-all of pain, and that it is not the goal of living but the revelation thereof. As responsibility nullifies death as a valid choice for life, so does death indicate the real value of the choices which are valid. Death reminds him that ambition and glory add nothing to a man in the end—even Caesar and Alexander come to naught in death. It is this realization, coupled with his accepted responsibility and his triumph over the reality of death which allow him to accept both Ophelia's death and his own. He now understands, that as Providence will not allow for man to choose death in life, neither will it allow for him to reject or in any way change what death brings to life. Death suggests the necessity of life first, and life calls for responsibility and some kind of action or stance. Thus Hamlet is not afraid nor hesitant to fight Laertes, leaving death to Providence and responding to the call of life. After all, "the readiness is all" (V.ii. 233).

Thus does hamlet mature throughout the play, from a grief-wracked youth who has never had to face responsibility or death to a sober and accepting man who has begun to understand the bearings that death and responsibility have on life. He is not fully wise yet, for he has let his acceptance of death, or so it seems, allow him to hold of life less value than Providence perhaps indicates. Hamlet manages to kill Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern without much remorse or guilt, and in similar fashion kills the king. This is a deep flaw in his self-examination of life and death, for in realizing that responsibility and acceptance are necessary to life, and that death indicates which choices in life are of real value and which are not, he fails to act on this knowledge and thus deals with his troubles and confusions in a manner detrimental to his own soul rather than accepting them or finding another way to handle them. For as much knowledge as Hamlet gains, he still murders (if one does not count the king as innocent) three innocent men, and this fact he must live and die with. Yet overall, Hamlet has become much wiser, more accepting, and indeed more mature, and had he lived might have proven a worthy and thoughtful, if not ambitious, ruler himself.

—Conni Blattler



UNTITLED

—Schell Simpson

AN HOMAGE TO TIME

(from THE THEOMACHY)

And then the terrible sea-god fell,
and forced the earth-quaking trident
with all his rage into the earth's womb.
The land heaved and erupted in its pain;
The land heaved and erupted in its pain;
along the Pelopennesos a gash
split the earth ten miles deep and a hundred long.
The bloody seam 'tween life and death was born;
a portal for the dead was given form.
The gaping maw emitted the putrescent
incense of his brother's rotted legions.
The tremours gradually softened and ceased,
but not before o'erturning each man and beast,
and the throne on the mount most high.

New rumblings then vibrated from the maw,
different from the cacaphonous tremblings
of the sea-god's trident. There was order
in these new sounds—a cadence of timelsss ennu.
It was the music of eternal dark and listlessness,
and as the thick stench hung in arid mist
above the gaping, bloody earth-slash,
he appreaed on the southern precipice.
A black cowl half-covered the deformed features
of his skull, the toothless leer of his grin.
Earth groaned at the presence of such foreign meat,
and sagged in revulsion 'neath the touch of his feet.

In cavernous resonance his voice
echoed across the heavens,
while the infernal cadence of droning
climbed closer to the edge of the gap.
"Dear brother of mine, I have arranged
an amusing little masque, just for thee,
of gray shades, bleak shadows, and death;
of the wretched lot which was forced on me
when you stole the heavens, and he snatched the sea.
I pray you will find this new dance fair,
and that my pungent masquers won't curdle this air.

"It is the waltz of my minions,
and I have named it, rather drolly,
'An Homage to Time,' because, of course, in the end
they all become mine. Each hero, each cretin,
each slouches to me, with his trite, petty sin
or dark atrocity, Each expects me to punish
and penance, to accuse and rebuke for some crime,
never realizing how indifferent I am.
Yet they want fire and demons, or the bliss of Elysium;
they need me to be their ominous Dark Lord,
or their luminous Angel of Light.
But for you dear brother, I lack this indifference,
and I shall mete out your pristine penance.
Thus I bless these most humble proceedings,
and say let the dance of my 'beloved' children begin."

Then from the bowels of the earth
were vomited forth the corpses
of all antiquity: a writhing mass
of slowly moving maggots, weaved
together so tightly that no air could
wedge between them. All were covered
in the slime of the new-born: all were
faceless, hairless, and had the transparent
skin and colourless hue of the maggot.
For Death only makes all men equal.
Their bodies weaved slowly in and out each other,
acrobatically head over heels,
the entire length of the earth-gash.
The droning cadence accompanied them—
the sounds of slurping suction which their bodies
made in the liquid slime covering them,
and the soft thuds of their slow rolling.

The living fled in lunacy before
the rotted stench and pale horror of this
glacial mort, so wide and unending.
Pluto's cowl dropped as his head
rolled back in silent laughter, revealing
the tufts of flesh which clung to his face
and the one eye which shined now in glee.
His skeletal hands clapped in hollow time
to the dance, their cavernous reverberations
echoing through the land, and he himself
danced the macabre jig of some eaten scarecrow.
And the writhing mass pushed slowly, ineluctably,
on to Olympos, and Zeus himself.

—Paddy Hanner

HEMLOCK AND HONEY

So observant was he
Of people's actions and so
Critically did he seek to find out motives for such
actions.

Rightly, though, he did so perceive to do
And yet condemned to death was he at a
Trial at which he so bravely defended his ideals,
Encouraged, no doubt, by hope in his philosophy
and thus

So weak a speech did he make in his defense.

Pray, throw light on your master's philosophy,
Lest we conclude how simple-minded he was.
Although wise he would appear to some of us,
To most, a wretched old flame; an
Ox and a fox, though, cannot be the same.

Another product of his master's philosophy,
Really brilliant was he and an
Instructor he became to great men.
So great was the academic fervor inspired in him,
That order did he introduce into the sciences
Onwards from whence have we our inheritance.
To the arts also did he apply his knowledge,
Leaving a legacy so rich in facts, among which, in his
"Ethics," he so greatly achieved precision.

—C. K. Ntim

GIFTS

Given Eyes.
I must See.

Given Ears.
I must Listen.

Given a Voice.
I must Sing.

Given a Mind.
I must Learn.

Given a Heart.
I must Love.

Given a Soul.
I must Pray.

How Fortunate animals are,
having no Responsibility
as great as Mine.

—Valerie Paluszak

SUNSET

The graying sky
Enhances the brilliance
of the orange.
And over all
An eerie half-orange
Lends its light
To the rest of
The peaceful universe.

God's powerful angels
Lend their wings
To the myriad of
Colors and happenings
That light the sky,
And bring relief
To the world's
Discerning eyes.

—Margaret M. Walters

WHEN PIGS FLY

In a town called Valedonia, there was a boy of twelve who wanted to know the infinite ins and outs of things. He was unfortunately, a pig farmer's son, and was left tending his stinking hoard of pork every day.

Valedonia is situated snugly in the cleave of two high mountains that tend to keep foreigners out and townspeople at home. These Valedonians are intense believers in God and law. They believed that God is in everything and everyone, and should be absorbed as much as possible. It is for this reason that the people are all incredibly obese. "God is in food," said law number thirty-five of God's Big Book of Laws, which had taken half a forest to print and distribute among many generations of Valedonians. "God is in sex," said law number sixty-nine of the Book of Laws.

In short, everything is done in excess for the glory of God. This includes eating, working and sleeping. Each are done to the point of vomiting, passing out and becoming comatose. Basically life is good for the Valedonians, even though it is short.

It is believed by the people that the only true soul-gratifying knowledge could be found in the Big Book of Laws. Our boy of twelve thought there must be visual proof of God besides the Book. "What forces the light over one mountain and behind another every day?" he thought while tending his pigs. "Tomorrow I will see if God moves the light into the sky. I will climb the mountain and see for myself."

The next day the boy pretended he was going out to tend to his pigs. He neglected his chores and started climbing the mountain that the light came over every day. The mountain was known officially as Light Mountain. Not surprisingly, the opposite mountain was known as Dark Mountain.

He climbed in the early hours of the morning and speculated about how he could catch God asleep with the light. He was fiercely determined to find out what it looked like. He grappled sweaty-palmed up juts of rock that soared straight up behind his house, and below he could see his pigs beginning to stir and root for food. But, the master was gone and they would have to go hungry. "This search will be my hard work for the day," thought the boy.

Eventually he noticed that he was getting tired and out of breath, for this work turned out to be much harder than what he originally thought. "I need to find out. I need to know. . . I need to take a rest."

With that, our obese little friend sat upon a ledge and looked out over the steaming valley of Valedonia. "This is God's view," he thought. It was still very early in the morning and the boy hadn't gotten enough sleep and

was a little disoriented from the dark on Light Mountain. Before he knew it, he was asleep on the ledge and his search for proof was now cut short.

He slept for hours, and soon the great light started creeping into the sky. It warmed the boy's body and he had dreams of beauty and of flying like a kite where he wished the string to break so he could be truly free from home. He wanted to fly high enough to sit with God so he could come back and tell everyone what He looked like. Then a painter could make a picture for people to pray to in the church. It could be a perfect portrait of God, and everybody could know what he looked like.

Suddenly, the boy woke with a start, lost his balance, and started falling down the side of the mountain. He screamed and bounced as great gashes were made by the rock in his skin. Down he went, crashing through the brush until he was finally afforded a view of his house and pigpen. It was here that he dropped unobstructed for three-hundred feet into his pigpen with a muddy, bloody splat. Terror and confusion were his last thoughts.

The pigs were hungry, so they ate him. In turn, the family ate the pigs on the day of sad ceremony for the missing son. "Grief is good," said law number one of the Book. So the family made sure they suffered for many years after his disappearance. All was holy, and no one was the wiser.

—Bryan Davis



SAG

—Schell Simpson

THE MEMELMEN

Memel is a place so small that it would be fictitious if it weren't part of a bigger place. It is only important to those that live there, and to those that live around it. Of those that live there, many are themselves important, having more money than others of Memel, or better blood.

Klaus does not have this better blood, or even any Memelian blood, but his father has money. When Oogli, Konerg, and Feodor ride up to him in greeting, they do not treat him funny for this, but Oogli does get treated funny. His father, thought of better blood, helps those of lesser wealth, giving up his extra wealth freely.

"That's funny!" said Feodor, his family having the most money.

"Maybe," says Oogli, "if your family had done the same you would not be here."

"They did, they did a lot," said Feodor, "or my raising would have been in the cold fields, rather than in Moscow."

Feodor is sensitive. He sometimes feels homeless.

"Do you like returning to the home of your ancestors?" interest Konerg.

"I might," says Feodor, "if Klaus' people weren't about to take it again."

"That's funny," says Klaus, glaring at Feodor over the heads of the others.

"That's fantasy!" rudes Konerg, laughingly.

"Really, Kon?" Feodor asks icily.

"We have problems *here* to deal with," reminds Oogli, "that are of a higher plane."

"Like planning the party!" Konerg happies.

"Yes!" says Klaus, brightening. "Like the party!"

"Yes!" mimics Oogli. "Like the party!" Oogli could be self-righteously annoying at times.

"I know my people. . ." argues Feodor.

"We *all* know *your* people!" affrights Konerg.

". . .and I know Klaus!" Feodor continues.

"We know his, too!" says Oogli, bitterly. Klaus grimaces hurt and lonely.

"Mine are not better, Klaus," Feodor says gently. "but yours aren't just next door; they're already here!"

It was true. Klaus was not lonely in the same way Feodor was.

"That's not true!" cheerfuls Konerg. "We're here! . . . And the party is almost upon us!"

"What about the others?" persists Oogli. "Poverty is *already* upon them!"

The others lighten his concern with playful teasing. Klaus and Konerg steer things back to the festive, and in the healing spirit of comradeship, the con-

versation is failed.

The night after the party, Oogli is hungover. Outside he sees a blind man waking, brushing off late winter snow. The cold blankets everything, and, downcast, Oogli feels himself deserving to be engulfed in it. The blind man shuffles off, and Oogli feels himself alone.

Oogli's feet feel a tremor.

Out of the muffled silence come distant roars, then closer, mixed with biting voices, some shouting commands, some viciously jeering. The snow lifts as heavy gray trucks swirl around him, laden with armed men with sneering faces, others running alongside the trucks, waving banners and banging on doors, some opening meekly, some opening triumphantly with smug, traitorous greeting to those of their common blood. Oogli is seized, but later let go, his captors praising his father's efforts to save the people from the oppression of the few.

Oogli wanders aimlessly through the streets. He hears that Feodor is jailed as an enemy of everything. He hears that Klaus is gunned down as the only Memelian to vainly fire back. He hears that Konerg is fine, but he finds him as different.

Konerg smiles and shoulders up a heavy sack, obediently heading to the work yards, the predestined purpose of his people fueling his ancient blood. Oogli grabs him, pleading with him to fight.

"Prussia reclaims her own," stoics Konerg, "and the world will never notice."

Oogli gives him a sandwich and watches him go, vowing to boil his own blood before every giving in to oppression. In time, he merely disappears, an unknown martyr for a place so small it *should* have been fictitious.

—Robert Genadio

NAIAD

She gives me a smile
that fills my being
as a bubbling brook
would fill the pond.

Her eyes are clear pools,
brilliant blue.

Yet I am afraid
I will drown
in the lazy stream
of her mind.

—Joe Curto

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AGORA is published by the Student Union of Belmont Abbey College and Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina 28012.