

THE ARIMASPIA

SELECTED TITLES BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Sappho

Party Going

North of Yesterday

Art & Discontent

Art & Otherness

The Triumph of Anti-Art

Yves the Provocateur

Art, Love, Friendship

The Shape of Ancient Thought

Seventeen Ancient Poems

THE
ARIMASPIA

OR

Songs for the Rainy Season



THOMAS McEVILLEY



WITH A PREFACE BY

Charles Bernstein

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“And autumnstruck we would
not hear the song”—A PREFACE

*When autumn lay like a drawn sword in the hills
And chilled us with its deathly radiance,
We flushed like leaves that beauty's fever kills
And asked what lover loves with permanence.*

*And rising to the trail we rode away
From fever of that blade, and would not see
Where all around the dreams of lovers lay
Which once the summer guarded jealously.*

*And autumnstruck we would not hear the song
That echoes in the painful hearts of these
Who lingered by love's fountain overlong
And lost their dreams among the fallen leaves.*

—THOMAS MCEVILLEY

EVERYONE TALKS about working outside the box but most of us don't even know what box we're boxed in by so we box ourselves in all the more. The work of Thomas McEvilley not only shows the imaginary fly the way out of actual fly bottles but also shows that preposterous insect, who represents our homing instincts (*nostos*), how to get back *in*, even though the 'in' is not what it was or what it will be either, once you sit down, take the several loads off your mind, and think about it.

Scholar, poet, novelist, art historian, critic, and translator, McEvilley was born July 13, 1939 and died March 2, 2013. He grew up in Cincinnati, where he studied Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, and classical philosophy in the classics programs of the University of Cincinnati (B.A.), and the University of Washington (M.A.).

In 1969, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Cincinnati in classical philology. He taught at Rice University from 1969 to 2005, commuting there for many years after he moved to New York. In 2005, he founded the M.F.A. in Art Criticism and Writing Program at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

His art essays are collected in several books published by Bruce McPherson of McPherson & Company: *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* (1991), *Art & Discontent: Theory at the Millennium* (1992), *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism* (2005); *Yves the Provocateur: Yves Klein and Twentieth Century Art* (2010); and *Art, Love, Friendship: Marina Abramovic and Ulay—Together and Apart* (2010). His other books of art criticism and history are *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt* (Allworth Press, 1999) and *The Exile's Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). In addition, McEvelley wrote monographs, catalog essays, and critical reviews of James Lee Byars, Carolee Schneemann, Julian Schnabel, Les Levine, Pat Steir, Antoni Tapies, Sigmar Polke, Dennis Oppenheim, Kara Walker, Nancy Spero, Thornton Dial, Leon Golub, Richard Tuttle, Agnes Martin, Joseph Beuys, Paul McCarthy, William Anastasi, Susan Bee, and many other artists.

In 1984, McEvelley published in *Artforum* a critical account of William Rubin's and J. Kirk Varnedoe's 1984 Museum of Modern Art show "Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." This essay, and the exchanges that followed, illustrate McEvelley's rhetorical power to show the willfully parochial world of institutional high art that there is an outside to their jealously guarded inside, an outside which, for the moment, let's call *non-Western cultures*. This outside continues to exist not only adjacent to our inside but also under it: is the ground on which we walk.

McEvelley's more important, harder to grasp, teaching is that our erection of the dog and pony show of Western Civ has disconnected us from the living Western tradition that is our clas-

sical inheritance, an inheritance we have systematically mis-recognized, squandered, and disfigured.

In 1987, McPherson and Company published McEvilley's *North of Yesterday*, which, like *The Arimaspia*, or *Songs for the Rainy Season*, is a Menippean satire. These two literary works are closely related to each other and distinct in genre from McEvilley's other works. McEvilley also published two monumental philological studies that bear directly on *The Arimaspia*: *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (Allworth, 2001) and *Sappho* (Spring, 2008). At the time of his death, he was working on a study of *The Greek Anthology*, which overlaps with *The Arimaspia*.

The Greek Anthology is a gathering of about 4,500 short Greek poems by about 300 poets. The poems cover a millennium of Greek verse, from the 7th century BCE to the 6th century CE (from the time of Homer to the Roman age). As a source for *The Arimaspia*, McEvilley used the Loeb Classical Library edition, which published a set of translations by W. R. Paton in 1916-1918.

Meleager of Gadara (first century BCE) was the most important compiler of *The Greek Anthology* and Meleager included his own great poems in the collection. McEvilley seeds *The Arimaspia* with a set of ten of his own arresting Meleager translations, many of which were composed in the 1960s (these can be identified fairly easily in the narrative since they are framed by references to Meleager). The narrator of *The Arimaspia* is a poet/philosopher from Gadara, a latter-day follower of Meleager, who journeys from Gadara to India with "the idea of . . . of establishing a philosophy school in India and fomenting a synthesis of Greek and Indian thought." Perhaps the narrator—who went to college in Antioch (Greece, not Ohio!) and graduate school in Alexandria, and who is serially reincarnated over the hundreds of years of the story—is an avatar for the author. For in *The Arimaspia*, palimpsest displaces continuity: the unreliable narrator is a figure of imagination.

Gadara was a Greek city in ancient Syria (it sits at the border of present-day Jordan, Israel, and Syria). Apart from Meleager, Gadara's most famous son is Menippus (third century BCE) and though the work of this wit does not survive, his followers established the genre of Menippean satire. Menippean satire is a speculatively mixed-genre genre: it is an essay in the sense of a trying or testing. The Menippean moves from socially satirical prose to lyric verse, philosophy to fiction, often touching on current topics. McEvelley's version of Menippean satire is digressive, wild, fantastical, and has shifting points of view; it is intermittently comic, with strong narrative threads. *The Arimaspia* and *North of Yesterday* are exemplary contemporary Menippean satires. *North of Yesterday* was labeled as a "novel" and there is much to justify calling *The Arimaspia* a novel. But I prefer to think of *The Arimaspia* as a picaresque epic poem because it continually pivots on lyric poems that unhinge plot while casting the narrative like a fisherman casts his line. Bahktin saw the hybridization in Menippean satire as germinal for the carnivalesque novel and *Menippean* is sometimes just used to mean broad social satire. As company for McEvelley's sense of the Menippean, beyond Sterne, Pound, and Joyce, who were key writers for McEvelley, I'd propose (in American literature), William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All*, John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, Raymond Federman's *Take It or Leave It*, Nathaniel Mackey's epistolary poem/essays/novels, *The Midnight*, and *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (Susan Howe's mixed genre works), Madeleine Gins's *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, Leslie Scalapino's *How Phenomena Appear to Unfold* and *Zither & Autobiography*, as well as my own *My Way: Speeches and Poems* and *Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions*.

Then again, with all the sophists who populate *The Arimaspia*, it might be just as well to think of this work under the sign of 'pataphysics, Alfred Jarry's swerve-inducing science of imperceivable solutions to opaque problems. *The Arimaspia* is filled with mind-twirling zen dialogues and epigrams, suggesting if not Heraklitus on acid than Homer retold by Thomas Pynchon.

The title *Arimaspia* comes from a lost ancient road trip poem of that title by Aristeeas of Proconnesus, from the seventh century BCE. Herodotus says that the Arimaspi were a one-eyed people from Scythia who fought an ongoing battle with the griffons to capture their hoard of gold. This book is the site of that battle.

The Arimaspia is a work of grand collage and radical pastiche, in which McEvelley's own poems, translations and narrative are hard to distinguish from the cascade of borrowed materials. Indeed, *The Arimaspia* is replete with citation and quotation: even the material that was not appropriated sounds as if it could have been—and each rubbing (as of an epitaph) comes across as fresh insight, made new for new time.

Stunning in its archaic originality, *The Arimaspia* is a work of extraordinary learning, steeped in classical references that go well beyond the ken of most readers. At a certain point, the dance of the sources gives way to an immanent experience of refamiliarization, in which long-elided classical works come to life.

It's Greek to me! The marvelous conjuring trick of *The Arimaspia* is to take up Isocrates's notion that to be Greek is to absorb Greek thought, a Hellenocentric idea adopted by Alexander the Great whose concept of merging East and West in his campaign to Hellenize (invade rather than colonize) India in 326 BCE is central both to *The Arimaspia* and *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, which can be read as twin works (and indeed the narrator of *The Arimaspia* follows an intellectual and geographic itinerary—from Greece to India—similar to that of *The Shape of Ancient Thought*).

The Arimaspia incorporates extensive sampling and adapting of Nonnus's *Dionysiaca* (from the 4th or 5th century C.E.), often in italic inserts. This long poem chronicles Dionysus's voyage to India (Zeus ordered Dionysus to conquer India) and as such is especially relevant for McEvelley's engagement with the crossover between Indian and Greek culture in the Axial era, to use Karl Jasper's term for the period hundreds of years before and

after Homer. Because of the extensive quoting from this source, Dionysus might be the presiding spirit of *The Arimaspia*. McEvilley uses W. H. D. Rouse's translations from the Loeb Classical Library (1940), usually adding lineation to Rouse's prose translations. Other sources include Homer, Orphic lore, *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, sophist Philostratus the Elder and essayist Clement of Alexandria (both from the 2d century AD), along with *Greek Anthology* translations by McEvilley of Anacreontea poems and poems by Philodemus (like Meleager also from Gadara).

Amidst the narrative and the web of citation are two startling poems by McEvilley, published here for the first time though probably dating from 1964. One of these is the epigraph to this preface. Listen to the other:

*About his head no dark no dark blooms dove,
Confusing his passion invulnerable and so
Blossoming cruel flowers of the grave.*

*But pacing among the slain he sought the grove
Whence stirred the dreams in which those sleepers lay
about whose heads the dark, the dark blooms dove.*

*So underneath his body and above
The blood made pitiful armor where he lay
Strewn with scarlet flowers of the grave.*

*Then we, like restless sleepers who, alive,
Scream for the rest that laid that hero low
About whose head the dark, the dark blooms dive,*

*Bore him away, laid by the breaking wave,
Safe, safe in the gracious fingers of the sea
that proffered splashy flowers for the grave,*

*and laid on his whitest breast the gold, the mauve,
grand robes of innocence, and then we knew
about our heads the dark, the dark flames dove;
blossomed hideous flowers of the grave.*



IN EARLY SEPTEMBER 2013, I got a call to come visit Tom. He was sick with esophageal cancer. I got off at the wrong subway stop—it was after nightfall and the rain was coming down so thickly I couldn't read the street signs or see more than a foot ahead. Often disoriented, I proceeded to walk many blocks in the wrong direction. When I finally arrived at Tom and Joyce's apartment on the deep lower east side, late and soaking, I found Tom in a big hospital bed that had been installed in the living room. He talked with me about the surgery he would be having at Memorial Sloan Kettering. I saw him one more time at home and then began visiting him in the hospital, where he went in and out of intensive care. Tom stayed in the hospital a little over four months, and his hospital rooms became a shadow world between death and life. While his death often seemed imminent, so did his recovery; and it went like that, with hope undercut by close calls, Tom taking this final journey—alive to each moment of consciousness he could fight for against the rapacious clutches of his afflictions.

One day in early March, I tried to call Tom at the hospital but could not get through to him or to Joyce. Late that night, sleepless, I began to write a poem sparked by two lines in the 15th-century ballad, "The Not-Browne Mayd" that had been going through my head, though I didn't know why:

*Wherfore I wyll to the grene wode go;
Alone, a banished man.*

As I was finishing the poem, I got a note from Joyce.

Tom was sleeping.

He died two days later.

The Green Wood is the imaginary space of the outlaw and of banishment, from which we can begin our voyages of return (*nostoi*).

It is, like all Tom's work, a testing ground.

Song of the Wandering Poet

for Tom

I must now to the green wood go
And make a house of clay and stone
And lay upon the barren floor
And weep for what I have no more.
There will I make a diadem
Of broken glass and borrowed hemp
Remembering true times I've spent
In wasted moment's sweetly scent
Torn by maelstroms, frail, unkempt.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

THE ARIMASPIA

ENVOI

A VOICE ricochets through the night sky:

“Our songs have hardened into laws!

“He poured in equal portions of Sameness and Difference, mixed them, and drew the soul of the universe out of the mixing bowl. The whole fabric then he split lengthwise, and making the halves cross one another at their centers in the form of the letter X, he bent each round into a circle and joined it up; made the one the outer, the other the inner circle. The outer movement he named the circle of the Same, the inner, the circle of the Different. With agile hand the movement of the Same he caused to revolve to the right, the circle of the Different to the left.

“He turned once more to the mixing bowl whence he had drawn the soul of the universe. Now, he poured sameness and difference as from unsteady cups. And when he had thus compounded the whole, he carefully divided it into souls equal in number to the stars, and with his invisible motions distributed them, each soul to its several star.”

Querulous complaints are heard.

“If the earth too revolves as a planet, why was the circle of the Different divided not into eight, but seven? Why was not the Earth reckoned among the planets where they race about the sky as instruments of Time? Why was *her* period not counted among those whose consummation makes up the Great Year?”

A dumbfounded silence echoes dully through the circles within circles of the universe, slipping off one sphere to slam into another, ringing and ringing again a proud but muffled bell.

Something replies, a voice distantly rounding some unseen corner.

“From the spindle of necessity these numbers are spun!
“The moon accelerates the motion of the Different; the Sun
spurs on the motion of the Same.”

(But haven't you heard?

*(“Beneath all this zooming and spinning a huge
chasm lies, gloomily overlaid with palpitating
darkness. And therein, believe me now, is a shin-
ing egg, wrapped round with mist and chaos, and
in it (trust me on this), enveloped in a bright cloak
of cloud, a baby god slumbers!”)*

[How carefully can you listen?]

*(When the egg is squeezed and broken by the ser-
pent Time, the baby slithers out. At once the world
is filled with a blinding radiance—yet he himself
(this is his special trick) remains invisible.
(Except at night.*

(Then in the darkness one can see him glowing)

You see, in order that Time might be brought into being, Sun and Moon and stars were made to define it. The year contains all things in its circularity. And Time is the body of the year.

Time is the first of all things that are moved by the baby god where he rides forever with his car and horses on the vast distant orbit of extended night; Time's revolution then drags all other things round in a weary circle.

See?

*Puzzled, the baby god enters the Cave of Night to
inquire of the ancient goddess.*

*“How to preserve both the world's unity and its di-
versity,” he inquires, “both its order and its chaos?”
She puts her moist lips to his immortal ear. “Catch*

everything in a net of aether," she whispers hardly audibly, "and hang heaven, earth, sea, and stars from a golden chain."

The planets move at different speeds because their wills are different. Their names are different. Yes, their waists are thicker or thinner. Their laughter mounts greater or smaller, their breaths roar hotter or colder, their poor little

circles

make up the world's soul. And its body? Its fat or thin little body?

Such an egg appeared once in the sky as I shall tell you of. (I speak for those entitled: close your ears, ye profani!)

(One must not pull apart the god within oneself.)

*I have flown out of the circle of heavy grief,
and stepped swift-footed into the circle of joy!*

He sang how heaven and earth

the paths of sun and moon
and how the mountains rose, how the noisy naughty rivers,
nymphs rollicking beside them, all creatures came to be

So through discord all things are steered through all. (Fall all into Difference, and all form a whole again for the Same.)

Dancing with mirrors and the cry *Evoi!* When he saw his reflection he followed its gaze and came to the place of slaughter.

(Many are those who bear the narthex, but the bacchics are few.)

The universal law extends throughout the air's broad realm and the enormous light

(Take counsel in whispers)

(To depict the cosmos, trace a circle of misty, fiery aspects, then stretch across its diameter a serpent with the form of the letter theta. Even so great Time fashioned from divine Aither a bright white egg

(Yes, Time gave birth to Eros and the winds winds winds flew out out out and away up and out and away away away)

Yes! That must be it! The world began in the likeness of an egg! Of course! And the wind encircling the egg like a big big snake began to strangle the world—look, the world’s baby body is getting squeezed!—and as the terrible wind-serpent squeezed and squeezed the world’s little body tighter and tighter—lo, it split into two hemispheres, and all at once the atoms began to sort themselves out, some light and pretty shooting above into the bright air and the noble sky, the heaviest and dirtiest sinking and slinking down down down into the land and the fluid stinking waters, and the atoms now began moving by themselves, without any voice speaking to them anymore, without any instructions at all, and the winds and the sky and the sun and the moon and the stars—everything still was driven mercilessly onward

Eros the lovely

the baby god who lies in the dark cave of the unborn world the image of wind-spin pasturing in his heart swift eyeless love

He mates with night! producing the visible world!!

(and shows them manifest who weren’t manifest before)

(He mates with night!)

seated by Helios, surveying the holy firmament
a white foam curled about them as they drifted

[these things the father made in the misty cave]

First, ancient Chaos’s stern Necessity
And Time who bred within his serpent’s coils

Aither and two-sexed two-faced spherical Eros
Night's famous dad

and placed his distinguished sceptre in the hand
of lady Night, that she hold royalty,
Eros first, but then his mother Night

He longed to know:

“How shall all things be one, yet each distinct?”

And our goddess, the lady, Night, replied:

“Catch all the stars in infinite aither round
and catch the earth, the boundless sea, the sky
and oh yes all the circling signs of heaven.
When you have strung a firm bond round them all
to aither fasten them with a golden chain”

(Haven't I told you this before, boy?)

fire and water, earth and air, night and sky
the single root they made three
divided his limbs made them three

*two sexed great sky courser
egg-born, resplendent with golden wings
bellower, famed seed,
mystic, hidden whizzer, lucent scion
who cleared dark fog from before our eyes
whirling all round the cosmos on thy wings
circling and circling the world's round baby body*

“He has made existing things manifest!

The non-existent he hides within himself!”

(A golden sceptre thou holdest in thy hands
Time himself carved writing on thy sceptre
and gave thee it, that all things might abide
in circling songs of broken selves in tripping time in winging
wind in spinning spinned in ever waiting serpent mating night)

ARIMASPIA I

Praeludum: Pictures at an Exhibition

(*allegro ma non troppo*)

*Bring me Homer's lyre, yes bring it,
But leave that string of blood out.
Bring a cup of versing rules,
Oh and mix some metres in it.
I will sing, then I'll be dancing,
Not a scrap of sense left in me;
I will dance to horn and zither,
Crying out the cries that wine makes.
Bring me Homer's lyre, yes bring it—
Oh but take that string of blood out.*

I

I CRACK an eye at the day. It is suspiciously grey. I drift back to sleep, and a tortured dream.

In my dream the air is cool, the sky is wet, the clouds hang low and level and long on human things.

There is the squish of a footstep in wet sand. A poet walks beside the dreadful sea.

The dead are out of time, he thinks, stopping to squint at the misty horizon, worried because the sea has not yet separated from the sky; they have an eternal pull, he mutters, like a lunar tide.

I wake up and know that it is just before dawn. I shouldn't sleep anymore now, I think groggily; I pad barefoot to my desk and shuffle papers, trying to formulate something, I don't know what. I want the pages to lie in a certain order, I think—but does the sequence of the pages really matter? What would that particular gesture imply one way or the other, I wonder?

And besides, do you really want numbers cluttering up the page? And furthermore, is there no value in uncertainty? And thinking yet again, is there not perhaps something that one has reason to protect from the assaults and bondages of number?

(An indefinite sea of being, perhaps?)

Gradually, inch by inch, slowly crawling, something enters me. There is a music that is one with the night. Screams, whistles, crashes, thrilling shrieks—from the world, from out there.

I rest my chin on my fist, elbow on the table. What holds a series of moments together, I wonder?

Suddenly I feel narrative creeping over some horizon, about

to leap on me from behind. I turn quickly—no one there.

Don't give in to narrative, I advise myself as if I were someone else, shaking my head from side to side slowly in the dream. Narrative is merely a panic response to the uncontrollable reality of the moment.

I furrow my brow again, wondering about something, I can't remember what. Surely, I think, surely I must at least have the pages lying in a certain order—eh?

[Is this a dream
too? I think so]

2

She ceased from her melancholy and held back her eyes from weeping. Then she bathed and donned spotless garments and went to the upper floor with her attendant women and placing barley grains in a basket prayed to Athena.

And the owl-eyed goddess heard her and turned on her heel and walked like a storm cloud through the door of her father's windy house and settled like a sea wind on the earth.

(Again I wake up.

(I study a book in the late gnat light.

(It tells the feats of humans. I wonder how the author has selected these, so few, so few to be remembered, from all who have breathed, gasped, and died.

(Hippocrates of Chios, who devised a method for the quadrature of lines.

(Theodorus of Cyrene, who discussed irrational quantities.

(The Phrygian Euphorbus, the first of men, they say, to draw triangles.

(Hypsicles and Diophantus . . .

(Theo of Smyrna . . .)

My head nods down to the page as a voice thunders out of blackness.

Hear me, child of Zeus who bears the Aegis, unwearied one

So he spoke and chose twenty men that were the best and they went their way to the swift ship and the untrustworthy sea

.

(I turn the page
With how much of myself do I enter into the past when I
remember?
How much of myself did I leave on that last page?)

“Good sirs, shun haughty speech.”

So she spoke, and my spirit was broken within me, nor had
my heart any longer desire to live and behold the light of the sun.

But when I had had my fill of weeping, then made I answer,
and addressed her, saying:

O sweet immortal, who will guide us on this journey?

So I spake and the beautiful goddess
straightway made answer

And the naked flow
the naked flow of wind
about her knees
the naked flow of time
of thoughts
sounds
images
tangling and refracting
forming and reforming

ploughing the deep

sailing the Red Sea
over the Khyber Pass from Baktria
nameless in mountain night

I pick up the fallen wine cup and read:

“Euphorbos made me.”

The wind slackens.

The grove stills.

Something crawls from the pool
Announcing the problematics of thought

I forget what I was going to say.

3

“MIGOD LOOK, boy, the miserable fellows lie as if hurled about the great hall, their clotting blood commingling slowly with the drying wine. I see isolated limbs and torsos sprawling on the tables and the floor, heaving chests gasping out their pitiful lives—and look yonder: the mixing bowl has been kicked over by the man who lies gasping beside it . . .”

(What? You already lost behind the veil of time?
You too?
And I still here?)

*The strong might of blazing fire destroys them.
The life leaves their white bones. Their spirit, like a
dream, flits away.*

(So saying, he plunged beneath the surging sea)

As when from the high crest of a great mountain
Zeus that gathereth the lightnings
moveth a dense cloud away
and forth to view appear
all mountain peaks and high headlands and glades
and from heaven breaketh open the infinite air

even so the Danaans
when they had thrust back from the ships consuming fire
had respite for a little time
howbeit there was no ceasing from war and hardship

And the son of Phyleus, as he watched Amphiclus that was rush-

ing upon him, proved quicker than his foe, and smote him upon the base of the leg, where muscle is thickest; and round about the spearpoint the sinews were rent apart; and darkness enfolded his eyes.

[What you
too lost]

*Overpowered by sorrow she made fast a noose on
high from a lofty beam*

Then among them spake again the horseman Nestor of Gerenia, old voice keening and wobbling:

“Cast ye the lot now for him whoso shall be chosen; for he in his own soul shall profit withal, if so be he escape from the fury of war.”

So the old man chid them and there stood up nine in all, and they marked each man his lot and cast them into the helmet; and meekly the rapine host made pious prayer, lifting their bloody hands with a shy glance toward heaven.

So spake they, and the horseman shook the helmet,
and forth therefrom leapt the lot that each desired,
and the herald bare it everywhither
and showed it from left to right ;
but they knew it not,
and denied it every man.

[A breeze rustles
grass blades. A
leaf turns toward
the sun.]

(“AH LOOK, lad! Here before us are torches, and yonder are golden mixing bowls brighter than the torches’ flame, and over there are tables laden with food on which hero-kings have been feasting.

*The strong might of
blazing fire destroys them.
The life leaves
their white bones.
Their spirit, like a
dream, flits away.)*

(“But everything is in disorder, for the banqueters in their death throes have kicked some things over, other things have been inexplicably toppled and shattered, still others lie at a distance as if flung. Cups revoltingly smeared with gore are seen at the moment of falling from limp, surprised hands; nor have the dying men any power to defend themselves, for they are drunk as fools, and their bladders empty unwilling, casting a pungent odor overall.

(“Check the nutty postures of the heroes who have fallen: One has had his throat cut just as he was partaking of food or of drink—ask for no more description, please; another as he was bent over the mixing bowl had his head sliced off and it plopped into the wine even as his hand poured in the water (in fact, he poured some on his own head all unwitting); another has had his hand lopped away as it carried a beaker, and would not let go, as if determined still to enjoy this last drink which, after all, was already paid for; another as he tumbles from his couch drags the table after him hilariously, food flying everywhere; still another

has fallen upon his shoulders and head as if performing a stunt. Look, this damn fool has no suspicion that death is upon him, raising its axe silently as he raises his cup with a quaffing cry, anticipating the drink with glistening eyes; but *this* one knows full well, judging from the terror of his gaze, yet lacks the strength to flee since drunkenness has loosened his limbs. Nor, I ask you to notice, is any one of the fallen pallid of hue, since when men die in their cups the flush does not immediately leave their faces but ruddy and excited they seem to be feasting still, impatient for the dancing girls to enter.”)

... her eyes crazed, her hair flying, her arm savagely raised ... stands over her with the axe ... casts about him the protection of her prophetic art ...

and as the axe is poised over her
her eyes crazed, her hair flying, her arm savagely raised
stands over her with the axe

in a state of inspiration
she hurls her fillets from her
and as the axe is now poised above her
eyes crazed, hair flying
she turns toward it
and utters so pathetic a sound
that with the remnant of life that is in him
he pities her
hearing her cry,
for he will recount it
in Hades,
in the concourse of souls
forever

5

(“NOW LOOK at the next picture, lad. Check the ruckus in the corner here. Do you recognize the scenario of the Deception of Pan?”

(“Pan, the nymphs are saying [this is what you should imagine you hear], dances badly, and goes beyond bounds in his leaping, jumping shamefully aloft in the manner of sportive goats; and they say they will teach him a different dancing, of a more refined character.

(“But to him refinement means nothing. His garment extended, he tries to make love to them throughout the long morning, his head licentiously flung back, his red mouth laughing raucously. They flee lightly, and bide their time.

(“At noon they set upon him, when Pan abandons his vile rutting at last and goes to sleep. There you see it. He used to sleep relaxed, breathing with peaceful nostril, soothing his fiery spirit with slumber. But today he is very angry. For the nymphs have fallen upon him ruthlessly. Look, they’ve tied his little paw-like hands behind his back, and he fears for his hairy legs now too since the nymphs are next trying to seize them.

(“Look, boy, look, for gods’ sake don’t miss this, here are the Nymphs in a group, some are Naiads—those who shake dewdrops from their hair—and the flower nymphs have hair that resembles hyacinths.

(“Shh. Whisper.

(“Probably you are asking what these three figures have to do with one another: a serpent, ruddy of back, which rises there, [why do you pluck at me boy], a beard hanging beneath its fanged jaw, eyes glaring terribly [stop that]; a bull that curves its neck beneath mighty horns and, pawing the earth at its feet,

rushes in as for a charge; and here a man that is half animal, for he has the forehead of a bull, and a spreading beard, while streams of water run in floods from his mouth..”)

“Let us now make our way upon the earth!”

leaving the upper regions, let us examine the most beautiful of things upon the earth, namely, the cities.

(He was beautiful to look at, as he waved his downy beard and left his hair unconfined for the south wind to toss wherever it would; and he had a blooming complexion, showing by its brilliancy the bloom of his body.

(His forehead glistened with graces, and his cheeks, reddening with youthful bloom, radiated beauty. . . He stood poised on the tips of his toes on a sphere, and his feet were winged.)

[But why do you distract me, boy, before I have finished my description?]