

## Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

*Theresa Rodriguez*

### **Quasimodo**

*"Look not on the face, young girl, look at the heart."  
--Quasimodo, The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

A vile, lumbering mass, so hideous,  
Rejected and despised by every eye  
That fears and is repulsed by odious  
Perversions of our kind. You horrify  
And shock the average sensibility  
For which all imperfection is rejected  
And avoided. You are ugliness,  
A limping lump of flesh. How you are affected  
By the body of your wretchedness!

But souls, come look beyond the skin  
And see a difference from within the heart!  
Quasimodo, you are kind within  
Your stricken, broken body. Counterpart  
To your condition is this rarity  
Of spirit and mind. Embodiment of good,  
Self-sacrifice, compassion-- for the love  
That gives all from a place of charity  
In spite of every pain is understood  
To form within as well as from above.

It only took a single, cooling cup  
Of water, but you drank with thankfulness;  
And as La Esmeralda lifted up  
Your sorry head, you looked with gratefulness  
To one who chose a good deed on the day.  
Oh, how this changed your lonely, saddened state  
To gratitude and love from emptiness--  
For now you loved her. Banished and away  
All forms of mockery-- a better fate  
Because your form was touched by loveliness.

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And then what? In her time of utmost need  
You aided her. You rescued her, you saved  
Her, sheltered her, protected her. Indeed  
You gave back hundredfold for what she braved  
In giving you that drink. But all in vain;  
The gallows waited for her neck. You tried  
To keep her from her date with hungry death  
But all for naught. For you could not obtain  
Her liberty. You watched her as she died,  
And let a howl out with woeful breath.

You cried and no one heard your bitter groans,  
But 'round your love were found your noble bones!

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### The Rise of Fall

There were such pretty flowers in the spring:  
The fragrant colors of a verdant time;  
Such fresh potentiality, sublime  
In all the loveliness that they did bring.  
Then summer issued forth a deep wellspring,  
Maturely ripening, where vines would climb  
And trees begin to bulge. This is the prime  
Of life when growth will dance and sway and sing.

But autumn is the time of now. I stand  
Amid the harvests and the fruit. The change  
Between the then and now, it leaves me jaded;  
I barely have the bearings to withstand  
This person of today. Indeed, how strange,  
How much the beauty of the past has faded.

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### **You died too soon**

You died too soon; too young for them and me.  
It comes in waves, the ebb and flowing tear;  
We feel your absence ever painfully.

We think of you so full and lovingly,  
And memories of tender yesteryear.  
You died too soon; too young for them and me,

And thinking of what was, what is, will be,  
The apparitions of your life appear.  
We feel your absence ever painfully,

For in the mind is what the heart can see,  
And then these images all disappear.  
You died too soon; too young for them and me.

And then again you come in memory —  
Your voice, the shadows of your body near.  
We feel your absence ever painfully,

And then again the visages will flee  
And fuzzy recollections become clear.  
You died too soon; too young for them and me:  
We feel your absence ever painfully.

*These three poems appear in Longer Thoughts (Shanti Arts, 2020).*