

Hereditary

by [John Grey](#) (May 2025)



Sailing (Thomas Eakins, 1875)

Hereditary

Having finished the tome on Buddhism,
there is nothing left to believe in—

same with the histories—
what's it to me
when an old white man becomes king—

economics—
I was mentioned briefly in a will—
ballet—

I danced badly—
philosophy and medicine—
I became my own world for a time
and then my body after that—

ideas are all around me,
never go away,
none of them are mine—

despite the classics on my shelves,
I will never understand
where all this life comes from,
or why some are in the boat
and others are adrift at sea
and drowning—

as for life studies—
my partner,
she awaits a firstborn—
she calls her folks
but they don't answer—

of course, there's always Camelot—
I'm half a corpse
with a blunt sword
looking out on a fading holy grail—

this is what I mean—
existence is not a comfort
and it sure isn't enlightenment—

and this is how it is:
the ones gone before
have left behind some books for me to read

Out in the World

mayhem
everywhere you find yourself

a street fight
a car crash
a protest
an unruly crowd gathering
to jeer a politician

nothing cruising
everything careening

no praise for anyone
merely hurled insults

even the quiet nooks
are occupied
by drunkards sleeping it off

pick the moment
pick the sensation
and it can only be vile

ask a stranger
what the hell is going on
then be prepared to duck

the air is unhinged
the seasons trample over you
the world is another name
for the tremor in your gut

Out of Hearing

She remembers a time
when a stoop
was like the local newsroom.

It seemed like
everyone on the street
would sit out there late morning,
shouting greetings across the street,
gossiping with passersby,
or merely, side by side with
their nearest neighbor,
catching up on babies, marriages,
which mill was hiring,
which one was letting workers go,
who stumbled home drunk
of Friday night
and what local ward heeler
was stuffing his pockets
with bribe money.

Now, she's in an apartment
in a high-rise,
does no more
than nod to the ones
she passes in the corridor.
and her only insight into other's business
is when there's a loud argument next door.

First, her voice lost its podium.
Finally, its purpose.

No Apology Needed

She apologizes for having borne no children.

By the time she was ready,
her body sent messages saying that
it was already too late.

She was only young at the time
but operations had been unkind.
Her womb shut down
before it had a chance to really open.

Of course, I told her it didn't matter.
I pointed out the kind of couples
that do have children,
how there was nothing special about them.
Procreation was like buying a lottery ticket.
The good guys don't always win.

[Table of Contents](#)

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *City Brink* and *Tenth Muse*. His latest books, *Subject Matters*, *Between Two Fires*, and *Covert* are available through Amazon. He will soon appear in *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Amazing Stories*, and *River & South*.

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