

# Two Poems

by [Grayson Quay](#) (February 2020)



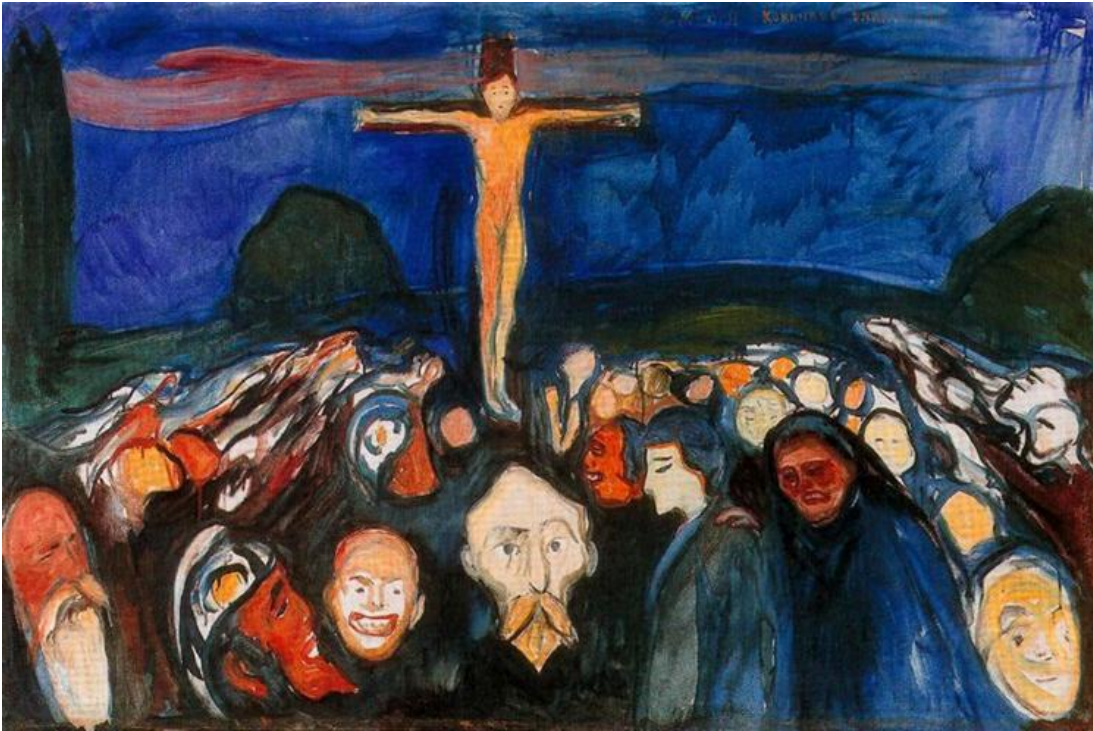
*Vampire*, Edvard Munch, 1893

## *Macbeth's First Witch*

I was an anxious village girl  
Who felt the planets' steady whirl  
Transfix me in a mundane home  
Beneath God's whelming overdome  
Which capped my flattened parchment world;  
I longed to burn the edges curled.

At eight I set the heath aflame  
And on a playmate laid the blame;  
At fifteen, with our secret sealed,  
I lured two boys into the field;  
We splayed me out as on a rack  
While heather bit into my back.  
At night I'd slip from bed and shout  
Beneath the cosmos "Let me out!"  
They catechized the life Divine  
In flakes of bread and sips of wine  
And promised an eternal place  
If I could but my will erase,  
But, crushed beneath the silence cruel,  
I struck dumb saints with mason's tools,  
And in the vestry dark heaved up  
My stolen wine, refilled my cup  
'Til on the floor I spun at odds  
To all designs that they call God's.  
'Twas then the beldam mistress came  
And asked of me my given name  
Which I gave to and for her power  
And have not thought of since that hour.

Dislodged from time and self and peace,  
I've lost volition to caprice  
And, augmented with what deprives,  
I torment pious sailors' wives.  
Incapable of loyalty  
I fear the goddess Hecate,  
But stumble toward her as I flee  
The man among the myrtle trees:  
That threat'ning grove so lately grown,  
The haven only faced alone.  
Now, poster of the land and sky,  
I fly in spirals until I  
Am everywhere and fill with me  
Heaven, hell, the heath and sea  
'Til I upon myself collapse  
In solace of perpetual lapse.



*Golgotha*, Edvard Munch, 1900

## Scamandros and Golgotha

ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ καὶ δουρὸς ἀκωκῆς ἡμετέροιο  
γεύσεται, ὄφρα ἴδωμαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἠδὲ δαείω  
ἢ ἄρ' ὁμῶς καὶ κεῖθεν ἐλεύσεται, ἣ μιν ἐρύξει  
γῆ· φυσίζοος, ἣ τε κατὰ κρατερόν περ ἐρύκει.

– Homer, *Iliad* XXI.60-63

A sunrise-to-sunset Sisyphean slaughter

Looms before the godlike son of Nereus's daughter—

Economy of *kleos* hollowed out beside the water;

The gift of death and destiny itself begin to totter.

To gain the Life the gods set by and hoard like silver  
talents,

To drink ambrosia thick like blood and make the grave a

dalliance,

To find the path from death to life, would throw it all off  
balance

Though we be torn by bronze or steel or raked by harpies'  
talons.

I like to think Longinus must have known his Homer well

And seen the thing the blind bard sensed but could not know or  
tell

When he made trial of the strong and spilled out over hell

The ichorous streams that never will run dry, but overswell.

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Grayson Quay is a freelance writer living in Arlington, VA, whose work has been published by *The American Conservative*, *The National Interest*, *Reason*, *The Stream*, and *Intellectual Takeout*. He holds an MA in English from Georgetown University.

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