

Two Poems

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



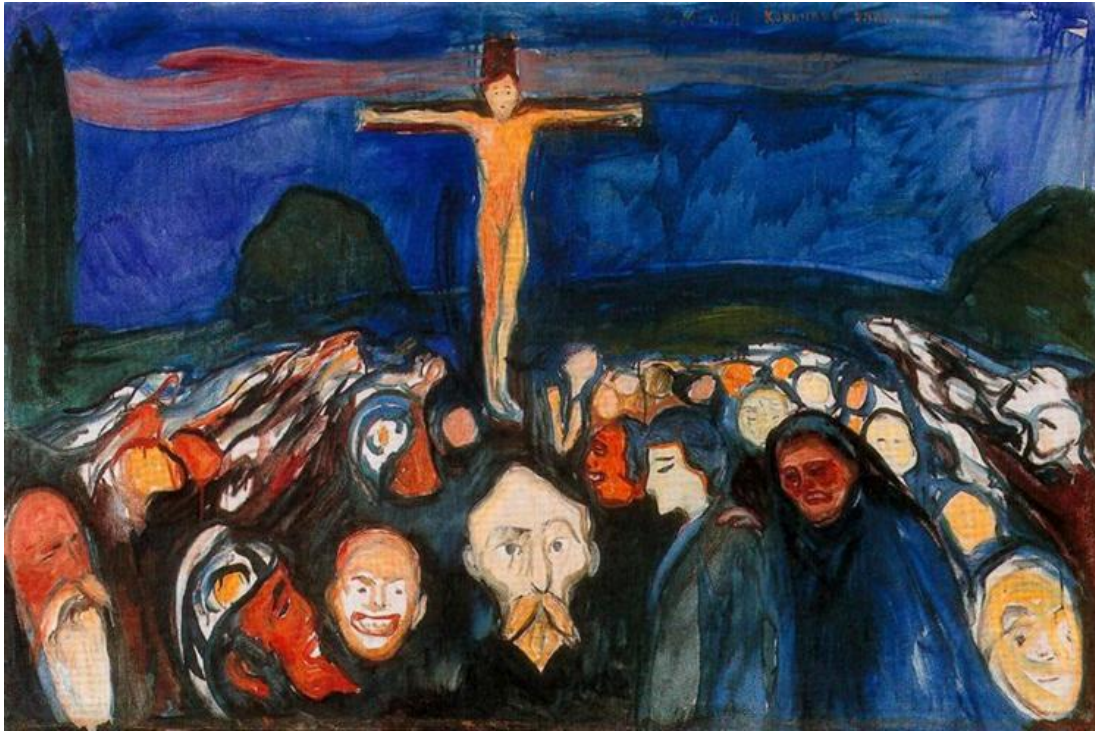
Vampire, Edvard Munch, 1893

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 ἡδὲ δαείω
ἧ ἄρ' ὁμῶς καὶ κεῖθεν ἐλεύσεται, ἧ μιν ἐρύξει
γῆ· φυσίζοος, ἧ 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.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

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.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)