

Antonia's Song

by Evelyn Hooven (June 2016)

(This is from my verse play Celestial Lullaby. The spirit of Antonia seeks to comfort her mourning mother. The mood is ghostly, dream-like.)

Oh, Mother, do not bury with me
Confirmation veil or wedding dress.

I'll need neither olive nor figs

Nor bread nor mineral water,

Neither gifts that nourish

Nor tokens of honor—

This is a journey:

One who was motionless and prone

Becomes an explorer—

Timid at first, then eager,

Lost halfway through

The astounding expedition

Then finding her way.

There you sit—

Blankets and earthenware,

Shirred muslin,

This wood, forced to brightness

By repetition of gesture,

Sheen of, film of—

Is it shroud or veil?

Death's not a jilting, Mother,

Though I won't be marrying a man

Right as rain

Reliable as stone—

Death is a journey through waters,

Without a compass

Like a sailor's

Or an astronomer's glass,

Death is a journey alone.

Build if you will

A careful tomb

The only home maintained with roses

And chrysanthemums—

But I must cross these borders,

Home tools are no use.

Build if you will

A careful tomb
The only home
Maintained with roses
To mitigate the taste
Of a near-consuming dust. . .
But whether you embalm or scatter
Is all the same to me. . . .

The one dream of the dead
The end of all dreaming
Is to awaken new
And full of blessing
Entirely elsewhere.

Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have appeared in *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

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