

Homage to Two Octogenarian Women

by Evelyn Hooven (December 2015)

I

(The restaurant)

The woman in the restaurant

Asks the words for *thank you, please, yes.*

The waiter thinks he is patient

With strangers,

But she mispronounces

Each word every time.

“A third wine,” he crows

All the way to the bar, “for that

Old woman seated there.”

She hears but little

Though sees and tries

To puzzle the whole thing out.

I thought it was good

(But now I’m unsure)

To learn a traveller's song—

A kind of migratory air

As old sounds fade

But I must be doing it wrong.

What should I do

At this age alone

When the lost children

Shriek or salute?

Is public demeanor

False or mute?

Is public demeanor

Mute and sure?

I'll never take three glasses

Or, if so, won't explain,

Never appear as a dreamer

But let the reverie come

And hold, hold down

The solemn, fugitive croon.

II

(The Morgan Gallery)

The cape she spreads
On Morgan's mansion stairs
Is pure medieval green.
Passers-by stare
As though she were an extra
In a period piece.
Stranger than Teiresias
She looks at anything but us. . . .
A Director's small mistake.

But what does she hold
With a grasp like death,
How many years to enchant
Those sundries in her violet tote
To Necessity's grave weight?
What does she carry,
Why *such* a hold?
Is it at us that she stares?

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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