

# On **William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *Dévideuse* (1877)**

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (April 2021)



**See the mantel's** moldings, con-  
Founded of the edge they had  
By the friction of those un-  
Numbered girls so keen to pad  
Past it to the daylight-mad,  
Stucco'd alcove. Here's a spun  
Spinner's weasel. Here's a sad  
Flower of vermillion,

Once a Perfect Future's ore,  
Relegated to a Thing  
Near her naked feet, this sore-  
Paradox-remembering  
Woman sweatless as a wing,  
White as an abandoned shore,  
Fondling a burl of string  
Soft & white as doubtful lore.

Some tableaux can circumvent  
*The* essential hunger one  
Brings to them: for logic pent  
Underneath, within, upon  
What the artist's mind has grown.  
See the canvas. This unrent  
Beauty's an adynaton  
Conjured for an argument.

To what end? Explain to me.  
Let this painted image flex  
Just as much reality  
As a breeze that stops the clocks,  
As some songs that bridge the Styx,

As souls that displace the sea.  
Only that which cannot exist  
exists eternally.

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