

# THE THREEPENNY REVIEW

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Twilight

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button.”

During the panel discussion, Richardson and Cornejo now more fully clothed, the dancers talked about the difficulties of working in a small space and in an extra-small increment of time. (“The hardest five seconds ever,” said Whelan. “I did about twelve takes.”) But mostly they spoke of how ruthlessly exposing the slowed-down footage was. It revealed, tendon to muscle, vertebra to vertebra, the sequence of motions by which an expert dancer creates fluid movement. (Or the illusion of fluidity, much as the projected frames of a movie fool the eye.) It showed the strength underlying Whelan’s grace, made obvious Cornejo’s ability to hold his shape in the air. Yet it also disclosed imperfections: a slight sickling of Cornejo’s foot, the way Whelan’s hands clenched for a moment like claws.

“I’ve come to embrace my imperfections,” said Whelan. “I think of my film as Spring. I feel this bursting tension.” Redden pointed out some of the film’s special beauties, such as the way Whelan’s long, loose hair trailed after her with a life of its own.

At another point, Michalek explained the process of finding the right camera: consulting with NASA, trying out a high-speed but low-resolution camera made for golfers to analyze their swings, ending up with a high-speed, high-resolution camera that the military uses to analyze ballistics. “We’re morally redeeming the camera,” he said.

Redden asked how long the process had taken. “Six months,” said Michalek. Taking the information in, Redden looked confused for a moment, as he calculated how many months had passed since he had agreed to present the project. “You mean when we talked...you hadn’t...?” Awkward pause. Laughter. “I’m glad it worked out,” said Redden.

Near the end, Michalek and Redden discussed the differences between the Guggenheim preview and the Lincoln Center presentation, where the juxtaposition wouldn’t be between live and filmed, but between each of the forty-five international dancers, their films projected on the three screens in a randomized order. Ballerina next to break-dancer next to capoeirista. “It’ll be like a big slot machine,” said Michalek.

Redden wondered how the social dance participants of Midsummer Swing, held in the same plaza, would react to the images towering above their grooving bodies. “Will people slow down?” he asked.

—Brian Seibert

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WE ARE sitting, the red-haired Australian visiting nurse, my husband, and I, around the four-by-eight-foot table that almost filled my parents’ dining room on Riverside Drive and since my mother’s death has taken up residence in our dining room, where it has a bit more space. When I was small, I used to play house under this very table, or else simply crouch under it and hide, enjoying the illusion of invisibility. Now, this brilliant late September morning fast turning into noon, I wish I could again crawl under this table and

hide. On second thought, I’m hiding anyway—hiding in plain sight.

How does one do this? A common and instinctive technique is not looking anyone in the eye: if you can’t see them, then they can’t see you. It would be good to be allowed to sit here with my eyes tight shut, or, maybe better still, with my head in my hands. Failing those options, I fix my gaze on an article about teaching *King Lear* in a community college. The article is on the table because the current issue of the periodical it appears in happens to contain a poem of mine entitled “Rear Window”—a poem, come to think of it, about hiding in plain sight. Writers from Emily Brontë to Philip Roth had, I noticed, presented their backs either literally or figuratively to the other people in the room. If only I could do that—do it literally—now!

The nurse, who has been sent by the longterm-care insurance company, or rather by an intermediate outfit called Care Scout, is sitting on my right. Her forearms are downy, almost hairy—“But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair,” as Prufrock observed of other arms on another occasion. But no lamplight is needed in this bright room at this hour. On her right, at the head of the table where I usually sit, my husband is—one can’t say presiding. Stony-faced, smoldering, he sits. He is angry, probably in part because he is getting bored and hungry and in part because he is being annoyingly, humiliatingly, intrusively asked to know more than he can know; to remember more than he can remember. (In part, too, because his default mode is a dull anger.) Whereas my task here at this table turns out to involve what is so often my role these days: to see, to register, to react to less, instead of more, than what’s in front of my nose and screamingly visible.

Spell “world” backwards. Subtract from 100 by sevens. What year is this? If you needed help in the night, what would you do? Copy this figure of two intersecting pentagons. What day of the week is it?

This last one he knows: it’s Friday. My first thought is that he’s wrong (he has just now and repeatedly been wrong before): it’s Saturday. It feels like Saturday, somehow. And this lopped stretched bisected day, what’s left of it, which is quite a lot, goes on feeling like Saturday. But in fact he’s right, I’m wrong: it’s Friday. It follows, then—and here my mind can take a little walk—that all the sunny forenoon, only a few blocks away, on 97th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus, the Farmers’ Market is in full swing. Glowing orange pumpkins, squash, carrots; golden chrysanthemums; various greens of spinach, chard, kale, cabbage, leeks, parsley; reds of apples; vermillion tomatoes; eggs, honey, cheese, breads—autumn’s cornucopia spilling over. And here around the big table, for what feels like hours, the three of us sit.

Oh reason not the need.

No wonder they like *King Lear* in the community college, or anywhere: the end of clarity, the loss of dignity, the smacking up against merciless limits, the pathos. But since this semester I am teaching another tragedy, I happen to be thinking more about it: *Hamlet*. The sudden (or imagined) changes blowing in and out like morphing clouds, camel

to weasel to whale; the good and bad moments and days; the irretrievable obscurity of the condition, so that every statement is a question and all the questions are wrong. To be or not to be? Do you know me, my lord? What to me is this quintessence of dust? If Hamlet flunks his own mini-mental, it’s surely on purpose. Isn’t it?

In literature, says the article to which my gaze keeps sliding back and back as this inquisition goes on and on, we are seldom fully aware of why it is we’re moved. Oh, so we’re fully aware of that

in life? Well, sometimes we are. But it is not a consummation devoutly to be wished when a day, or a piece of a day, achieves as much clarity as this bright September forenoon bestows. I dreaded this time around the table; lo and behold, it turns out to be dreadful. But already it is over, and George slams angrily out on one of his many daily walks, and the nurse finishes her tea, and she and I finish our talk. Perhaps, if I hurry, I can still get to the Farmers’ Market before it closes.

—Rachel Hadas

## Twilight

All day he works at his cousin’s mill,  
so when he gets home at night, he always sits at this one window,  
sees one time of day, twilight.  
There should be more time like this, to sit and dream.  
It’s as his cousin says:  
Living—living takes you away from sitting.

In the window, not the world, but a squared-off landscape  
representing the world. The seasons change,  
each visible only a few hours a day.  
Green things followed by golden things followed by whiteness—  
abstractions from which come intense pleasures,  
like the figs on the table.

At dusk, the sun goes down in a haze of red fire between two poplars.  
It goes down late in summer—sometimes it’s hard to stay awake.

Then everything falls away.  
The world for a little longer  
is something to see, then only something to hear,  
crickets, cicadas.  
Or to smell sometimes, aroma of lemon trees, of orange trees.  
Then sleep takes this away also.

But it’s easy to give things up like this, experimentally,  
for a matter of hours.

I open my fingers—  
I let everything go.  
  
Visual world, language,  
rustling of leaves in the night,  
smell of high grass, of woodsmoke.

I let it go, then I light the candle.

—Louise Glück