

Libby Hague's

martian odyssey #29



#29

the stars are wide

Marianne's story: thread 29

Oh Baby Bee - It's nearly our happy ending! But we are still in the happiness of jam and toast.

"The sea as quiet as light."

Christopher Logue, *War Music*,
Faber and Faber Ltd., pg. 6



"The stars are wide and alive. They seem like a smile of great sweetness and they seem very near."

James Agee, from the moving prose poem, *Knoxville, Summer of 1915*, set to music by Samuel Barber op.24 (1947)

The first time I heard this song was at Tanglewood with Phil and Dick. Barbara Bonney was singing and we were sitting near her. She seemed to dissolve into the role and I think that is why I have conflated that shimmering performance with the photograph I saw of Dawn Upshaw, another singer with deep musical intelligence, transported into another musical state of grace.

“The summer evening had begun to fold the world into its mysterious embrace.”

James Joyce, *Ulysses*, pg. 344

We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in that time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child.” Then begins a child's account of an evening quietly and spent with his family as they lie on quilts and watch the stars. It is a gentle catalogue of those he loves.

“Barber claimed that Agee's recollection of a fading past ... perfectly captured his own memories of growing up in West Chester, Pennsylvania ... Eleanor Steber, who commissioned *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, told Barber's biographer Barbara Heyman, “That was exactly my childhood!” David Isadore Lieberman <http://www.loudounsymphony.org/notes/barber-knoxville>

Set in wartime, composed in the immediate post war, it exudes a sense of peace and harmony until the very last line. The adults in the poem would have wanted to protect the child from talk of war, to have kept his innocence unperturbed as long as possible.

“After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.”

The poem ends with the child's insight into his own separateness in the midst of his family circle. That, perhaps, is what I want to wish away with string theories linking us all back up again.

O Joy!
You heavenly thing,
beautiful spark of the gods,
daughter from Elysium,
we enter your holy sanctuary
intoxicated with fiery rapture.
Your magic powers reunite
whatever custom strictly separates.
All mankind is reconciled
wherever your your gentle wing abides.

All the world's creatures
Draw joy from nature's breast;
Both the good and the evil
Follow her rose-strewn path...

Be embraced, Millions!
This kiss for all the world!
Brothers!..."

a short passage (without the deity connections), from the Ode To Joy by Friedrich Schiller as used in the choral ending from Beethoven's 9th symphony and chosen by Leonard Bernstein to be played in celebration of the fall of the Berlin wall.



[martian odyssey](#): the stars are wide, stone lithography with digital output, 20 x 78 in.

background photograph credit: NASA, NOAO, EASA, The Hubble Helix Nebula Team, M. Meixner (STSci), and T.A. Rector (NRAO)

“No. One moment more. One last Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness.”

Samuel Beckett, “Ill Said”, in Nohow On, Grove press 1995



www.flamchen.com from the Toronto Busker's Festival 2008



The happy ending scene in the tender garden as the mother welcomes her children with small bells (lily of the valley, campanulas echo).

It's a precarious moment with the ominous and twisted garden rising insistently, framing our view of happiness. The pressure of wild forms to take over the delicate, makes every garden a metaphor for the "fragility of goodness".

And now we have come back to Martha Nussbaum's poignant phrase.

Whirligig garden at Harbourfront from 2003 until the present



“**Love** alone fuses happiness and meaning ... for it recognises both the fragility and the sanctity of the individual.”

Chris Hedges, pg. 160,
War is a Force that Gives us Meaning

“The old dog’s tottering to him on newborn legs.”

The Odyssey, A Stage Version, Derek Walcott, The Noonday Press, 1993, pg.129



Thanks to:

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and the many authors quoted in these books

Brief project description:

This web /pdf edition of 30 booklets, connect and complicate the individual artworks in the Martian Odyssey series previously exhibited at Loop in Toronto. These booklets are intended to serve as a basis for comments on the artwork and their themes. If you want to have your comments considered for a web edition you can respond by sending an email to libbylibby@sympatico.ca with a subject heading of Martian Odyssey. I will be regularly updating the pdf's.

Martian Odyssey titles:

1. luck 2. riddles 3. the animals 4. translation
5. corps de ballet 6. The Girls 7. weave 8. net
9. slow motion 10. Big Bang 11. alouette
12. the wrong boat 13. the disaster
14. RAGE 15. white arms 16. plague
17. amnesia 18. ah.. 19. string theory 20.
laughter 21. dreams 22. Rules 23. justice
24. forgiveness 25. day after peace
26. un-rebuilding 27. blue-sky-blue 28. play
again 29. stars are wide 30. sing

Libby Hague is a printmaker + installation artist exploring themes of disaster, rescue and hope. [full cv](#)

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those handsome Moors all in white and turbans like kings asking you to sit down in their little bit of a shop and Ronda with the old windows of the posadas glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the fig-trees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rose gardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down on me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes."

James Joyce, *Ulysses*,
pg. 732, Shakespeare
+ Co., Paris, 1922



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