

DISTRACTED GLOBE: THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

by: Horatio E. Geist

The room is lit through a curtain-less window by the dusky haze of mid autumn afternoon. The gritty, anonymous waves of sounds from the street below trickle in on sporadic wind currents. The sounds of urban whispers fill the room like random ghost visits. An echo chamber for the exterior blurts and interior breaths.

The room itself is sparse. *Decor Minimale*. There is a twin bed jutting out from the wall. Taut, starch white sheets reflect the foggy hue of the room. An olive green canvas blanket is fitted to half way up the bed. It's a militaristic presence. There is a black shirt, pair of black trousers and a long black trench coat neatly folded in three piles. Centred on the wall behind the bed is an abstract ink drawing on luminescent white canvas.

The animate presence in the room embodies the stark sterility of the furnishings. Taut. Naked and still. He stands before the only other furnishings in the room. A full length mirror and a four-drawer dresser, where a cell phone, wallet, watch and a silver ring are placed in a row. The mirror reflects his inert, uniformly pale frame and juxtaposing thatch of brown hair. His eyes stare intently into his alter eyes staring back from a face sicklied over with the pale cast of thought. His spine is inked with a cross shaped tattoo formed from the letters: h a m l e t I I . The last "I" is circled and crossed out in fresh black ink. The wound is red and raw.

He is Hamlet.

He looks into the mirror. The undiscovered country stares back. A counterfeit presentement. His moment is stolen by the thoughts. He knows his mind. It is bourn upon this picture of his frozen face.

I am the tragedy to be. I am the tragedy not to be.

He is locked in his own perpetual paradox.

I am hamlet. But what am I? An actor? Or provocateur? A punk or raconteur? An inky black cloak shadows my eyes. So tired. His pale icy blue eyes whisper to me. Swear. Swear.

He winces. The pain unbearable. A maelstrom of stimuli charging his mind. Overload. Frozen. Static.

This distracted globe. He speaks to me. I am silent. He incites me. I am methodical. My passion, dormant. Some craven scruple fusts in me. Unused. I am not godlike. I am not. I am not a dog blinded by my bestial oblivion. Ah. That I am not. I am frozen. There must be some method to my madness or my thoughts will be bloody and nothing worth.

The mirror reflects the wincing. The frigid discomfort. But not the maelstrom. That is inconspicuous. An antic disposition for the world to regale.

Hamlet glances at his phone. The screen alights. A celebration. Anonymous faces. Familiar visages. His friend Horatio smirking in skeptical delight. He hears her voice through the madness and frivolity. A bluesy and sultry voice over a swampy slide guitar. She's singing to him. *So I ran to the mountains/Ran as far as I could/Got to find a new life.* Ophelia, his smoke fairie. The nostalgia makes him twitch. He can't see her. Her voice is the soundtrack. He examines the screen looking for her shadow. Her silhouette. She remains a ghost narrating the events. The frame blackens and instantaneously illuminates. He sees his mother. Smiles and tender. Playful and dizzy. She glances towards the screen and rolls her head. Her beautiful hair flowing hypnotically. She casts her spell. Hamlet watches the scene. It seems endless, but it ends. A shadow masks the screen. It starts moving out towards his mother. A figure emerges as the pulse of the sultry voice, haunting the air, snarls, *So I ran to the devil/He was waiting/I ran to the devil/He was waiting/I ran to the devil/He was waiting/All on that day/Oh yeah/Sinnerman.* It's Claudius - his uncle - who walks into the frame. He's horny. And drunk. And charming. And wrapping his mother. His mind blurs. The sultry voice echos in his thoughts.

Claudius. Uncle. Claudius! More than kin, less than kind. A pestilence on you. Mad rogue. Now how abhorred it is in my imagination. My mother and you. And sweat. The image will plague me. Forever.

Hamlet refocuses and stares again into his alter eyes.

I see my father's stone. Marked by a king's cross. Alone in a lost patch of weeded chaos. I see his body burnt and purged away. Sulfrous and tormenting flames biting his bones. He's whispering to me. Again. The flames dance to the cadence of his voice. Swear. Swear.

The mirror reflects the illuminated screen and his shadowed face. Two stories in an unweeded garden. Reality. And the mind.

His mother is dancing. Free. Her body a woman's not a mother's. His uncle's eyes are on her. Observing his prize. His brother's wife. Seeming-virtuous to the eyes of her cut-out spectators. A ghost in the eye of her son's thoughts.

That incestuous, that adulterous beast.

The icy blue eyes whisper to me. Swear. Swear. My father. His torment. His unhoused, unaneled soul imprisoned in ether. The dead's No Man's Land. My mother. My uncle. Inviting me into their incest. Their roguish orgy, while my father's bones will burn eternal. No ashes to free his soul. Sick. Sick. I am sick. I know what he wants. I know. Bit can I? Swear. Oh, rest. Rest, perturbed spirit.

Hamlet cuts the image. His mother and his uncle vanish. Their reality deleted. The screen displays static. His father's ashes.

The room turns black. A muted urban whisper echoes in the dark. Swear.

Static. Illumination.

LINES USED FROM HAMLET

To be, or not to be... But that the dread of something after death, the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns, puzzles the will... is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought

3.1.64-98

Look here, upon this picture, and on this, the counterfeit presentment

3.4.64

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, nor customary suits of solemn black

1.2.80-81

That capability and godlike reason to fust in us unused. Now, whether it be bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event,

4.4.40-43

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

2.2.223-224

O, from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

4.4.68-69

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on

1.5.191-192

A little more than kin, and less than kind

1.2.67

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue!

5.1.184

And now how abhorred in my imagination it is!

5.1.193-194

When I to sul'rous and tormenting flames must render up myself

1.5.6

Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house

1.5.17-19

Tis an unweeded garden, that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely.

1.2.139-141

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast... The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen... O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there! ... Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, unhouse'd, disappointed, unanel'd,

1.5.49-98

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

1.5.204

ANNOTATED SONG BIBLIOGRAPHY

Simone, Nina. "Sinnerman." *Pastel Blues*. LP. Philips Music, 1965.

Sinnerman is a traditional American recording popularized by the jazz/blues singer, Nina Simone. It has had many incarnations throughout the years, however, Nina Simone's rambling and roaring rendition about a sinner in search of redemption, is the version that resonates loudly when reading Hamlet. The ideas in this song mimic the conflicts that plague the two main characters in William Shakespeare's, *Hamlet* - the conflict of conscience. This crisis of faith - conflict of conscience - results in a similar fate for Hamlet, Claudius, and SInnerman; a fate in the pits of hell.

