The Brief Life of Oedipus Smith

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Abstract

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His existence seemed to offer evidence that God does indeed have a sense of humor. His body appeared to be constructed of left over parts, not all necessarily human. One might imagine him to be the butt of some divine joke.

"Hey boys, come here, see what I just created."

"Wow, boss! That's in your image? That's sure going to scare Hell out of them down there."

His walk was awkward, fluttery, as if the avian in him had somehow gained predominance. Perched on thin, tottering legs, he looked for all the world like a colorless flamingo. His face bore mute testimony to this theory. His eyes seemed to function not for him to see out, but for others to look in. To what, is left to the imagination—maybe the back of his head, or possibly an “out to lunch” sign. Approximately between, and slightly below the eyes, was a beak, which vaguely resembled a nose, but its only apparent function was to shade a continually silent mouth. Supporting this parody was his neck, a slender shaft of flesh commanded by a restless adam’s apple, which was in turn fastened to those flamingo legs by a curious torso, obviously pirated from some other creature.
This part defied categorization, possibly because of its manifold origin. Basically rotund at rest, when in motion it would telegraph its ancestry: Edentata, Mammalian, Elephantine, then Cetacean. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” And on the seventh day, he laughed his ass off. Hovering about this torso were the arms, which judging by their articulations contained many more than their allotted two joints apiece. Crowning these arms were the fingers, which suffered from the same malady. He appeared unable to control these excrescences, undoubtedly because their will was stronger than his.

Even his mother was not content to leave bad enough alone. A fond but rather poor admirer of Greek literature (and a firm believer that every young man should love his mother), she married a man named Smith, and as a result of this union, Oedipus Wayne Smith was released upon the world.

But, pranks once perpetrated, are not controllable. A guitar fit those irregular pieces like their mates in a jigsaw puzzle. They formed a oneness not present in any of the constituent parts. As he alighted onstage, the audience stared at this veritable menagerie flitting toward them. It seemed as if all the earthly creatures had mated in an orgiastic frenzy. But when he sat down to play, a fusion became evident. His body abandoned its previous assault and concentrated on singularity. The torso ceased its guessing game and wedded itself to the guitar, caressing the neck and body with a sometimes gentle, sometimes passionate love. Even the eyes changed, betraying the fact that there was an intelligent force behind them.

The music began slowly, issuing from his guitar and hands. Then gradually it spread until it became a transparent stirring emanating from the whole of his being. It seemed incredible that such an awkward marriage could give birth to that harmony. The audience sat quietly. The music surged over the people to be assimilated by their bodies. The symbiosis was complete: man, guitar, and audience. The music swelled through climax and all the partners relaxed in fulfillment.

Slowly he arose and tilted toward the audience. Its appreciation flowed over the ungainly figure. Quivering, he started toward stage right. The parts began to drift into dis-
parity. The mutinous left arm began to explore the intricacies of the lower back. The “out to lunch” sign flashed on in his eyes. The torso introduced its many parts: Edentata, mammalian. . . . He paused at the curtain to peer at the audience. The mouth approximated a tiny smile. For a brief moment he stood there. Then, after much consultation with various parts of his body, he passed from view.

Paraesthesia

*by Craig Parsons*

*Dist. Studies, Jr.*

Yesterday our days were melted in the sun,
Bled of their life stuff and essences into
Gutters and sewers; and being nothing
More than a sun-streaked afternoon,
We should call it the last sighting
Of the shadow of a shadow of a cloud,
Sweeping past the hillside and the snow,
Trickling from the weathered rock and cracking,
Forming torrent-streams on mountain slopes,
And tearing with tiny fingers
At the tree roots in the land
Merging valleys.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
Rafters down and wires round,
And so they've come to get me.

And the valleys were not hard to see
The clouds that slipped between the openings
And the closings, touching the branches,
Nodding in the dull air and looking down;
Their stiff, gray forms dropping
Crystal hints that glittered in the sun.