

Never More Together: A Wordless Poem

Steven McCabe

The Porcupine's Quill (Apr 15, 2014)

Softcover \$24.95 (272pp)

978-0-88984-371-4

This thought-provoking "wordless poem" of black-and-white images evokes enlightenment, heightened consciousness balanced by fear.

Never More Together, a visual and wordless poem by Steven McCabe, is an unsettling story of the harsh treatment of truth and perspicaciousness in a society ruled by fear.

McCabe introduces a world cradled in the coils of a giant serpent who watches over a garden where a man and a woman eat an apple of mystical origin and enjoy an innocent love. The simple familiarity of this story is rudely broken by the realization that a shadowy government is watching them in the garden on a screen.

Throughout the poem, the idea of enlightenment and heightened consciousness brought by the apple recurs, and the giant serpent continues to represent those ideas, uniting the people in the story and eventually gaining enough ground on earth to defeat the shadowy government.

This story is thought-provoking and easy—sometimes unsettlingly easy—to relate to. But it is also sometimes difficult to tease it out from among the confused images of the linocut prints. According to the written introduction, the prints were created and the story completed in merely forty days. That is an impressive flurry of activity, and is reflected in the urgency and emotion in the poem. However, it might be because of this speed that, without the help of the summary provided in the introduction, much of the poem is indecipherable. For example, it is frequently difficult to distinguish new and recurring characters. Of course, part of the merit of a wordless story is the many layers and interpretations allowed for between the artist and the reader. Still, a certain amount of visual clarity is expected.

The fact that the greater arc of the story is largely unintelligible without the help of a written narrative could undermine the power of the wordless poem. Images can speak a truth directly to the mind that written words dilute, and pictures are a universal language.

While aspects of the story require a background in a certain kind of culture—for example, the allusions to Christian origin mythology using transformation after eating the apple, the serpent, and a flying dove prelude peace—and might limit the audience, the poem really loses its universal potential when it requires translation.

McCabe's poem blends the power of mythology and allegory with the more close-to-home imagery of police violence and of the government monitoring—and punishing—the more enlightened citizens. *Never More Together* has the appeal of a classic fairy tale, where good and evil are clearly delineated, but at its heart, it reveals a much more complex story.

EMERSON M. FULLER (March 3, 2015)

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