

Hitchcock House Minutes

31 May 2007

After the triumphant return of Those Who Are About to Ascend Into the Upper Spheres from a reportedly-delicious restaurant of some sort, the final House meeting of the year finally began at approximately 10:11 pm, having been called into order by HSE Bruce Octavian Arthur. Prof. Ronald Syme (not to mention Robert Michels) would be pleased to discover further confirmation for his assertion that ‘in all ages, whatever the form and name of government, be it monarchy, republic, or democracy, an oligarchy lurks behind the façade’¹, as it was quickly revealed that President Arthur was not an autocrat but merely the head of a faction consisting of various Housing staff members and others without whom the meeting could scarcely have proceeded.

Nevertheless, Mr. Arthur provided proof of his *auctoritas* and demonstrated his embodiment of the principle of living law by announcing that last week’s Hitchcock House Constitution amendments, all proposed by him and passed essentially as designed, had been implemented and are henceforth part of the constitution.

Then stood there on shore, called out loudly, the messengers of the Housing Office; with words they spoke, threateningly delivered a message: ‘The bold Housing staff sent us to you, they ordered us to say to you that must quickly establish twenty-four hour silence in exchange for peace; and it is better for you that you buy off this storm of spears with such tribute, than that we deal out a hard battle.’ Then to the Resident Heads spoke the people, they raised aloft their shields, brandished slender spears, in words made a speech, angry and resolute gave answer to the messengers: ‘Lo, do you hear what this troop says? They would give you spears as tribute, fatal tip and ancient sword, that war-equipment which is of no use to *you* in battle. Too shameful it seems to me that you go back to ship unfought, now that you have advanced thus far hither into our land. Nor does it seem right to me that you make off with our right to party: point and edge must first reconcile us, grim battle-play, ere we be silent.’²

Peace having come upon their minds, the Resident Heads were silent and proffered up manifold offerings of peace: Bollywood Night, Fawltly Towers/Curb Your Enthusiasm, and *Simply Ballroom/Army of Darkness* (or some such).

Ah, Bollywood Night?
June first, 8:30 pm,
Room 512. *Hum Tum*.

Furthermore, Pearl (who may have changed her mind after her unexpected ponding) is having the last study break of the year on Sunday at 6 pm. However, Mr. Secretary suggests arriving ten minutes late, in order to increase his chance of getting steak. There will also be delicious, delicious Greek salad.

Finally, I leave you with (one of) my favorite poem(s): “Exile’s Letter” by Ezra Pound.

¹ Syme, R., *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 7.

² Excerpt, *The Battle of Maldon*, ll. 25-61., trans. Driscoll.

SO-KIN of Rakuho, ancient friend, I now remember
That you built me a special tavern,
By the south side of the bridge at Ten-Shin.
With yellow gold and white jewels
 we paid for the songs and laughter,
And we were drunk for month after month,
 forgetting the kings and princes.
Intelligent men came drifting in, from the sea
 and from the west border,
And with them, and with you especially,
 there was nothing at cross-purpose;
And they made nothing of sea-crossing
 or of mountain-crossing,
If only they could be of that fellowship.
And we all spoke out our hearts and minds . . .
 and without regret.
And then I was sent off to South Wei,
 smothered in laurel groves,
And you to the north of Raku-hoku,
Till we had nothing but thoughts and memories
between us.
And when separation had come to its worst
We met, and travelled together into Sen-Go
Through all the thirty-six folds of the turning and
twisting waters;
Into a valley of a thousand bright flowers . . .
 that was the first valley,
And on into ten thousand valleys
 full of voices and pine-winds.
With silver harness and reins of gold,
 prostrating themselves on the ground,
Out came the East-of-Kan foreman and his company;
And there came also the "True-man" of Shi-yo to
meet me,
Playing on a jewelled mouth-organ.
In the storied houses of San-Ko they gave us
 more Sennin music;
Many instruments, like the sound of young phoenix
broods.
And the foreman of Kan-Chu, drunk,
Danced because his long sleeves
Wouldn't keep still, with that music playing.
And I, wrapped in brocade, went to sleep with my
head on his lap,
And my spirit so high that it was all over the heavens.

And before the end of the day we were scattered like
stars or rain.
I had to be off to So, far away over the waters,
You back to your river-bridge.
And your father, who was brave as a leopard,
Was governor in Hei Shu and put down the
barbarian rabble.

And one May he had you send for me, despite the
long distance;
And what with broken wheels and so on, I won't say
it wasn't hard going -
Over roads twisted like sheep's guts.
And I was still going, late in the year,
 in the cutting wind from the north,
And thinking how little you cared for the cost -
 and you caring enough to pay it.
Then what a reception!
Red jade cups, food well set, on a blue jewelled table;
And I was drunk, and had no thought of returning;
And you would walk out with me to the western
corner of the castle,
To the dynastic temple, with the water about it clear
as blue jade,
With boats floating, and the sound of mouth-organs
and drums,
With ripples like dragon-scales going grass-green on
the water,
Pleasure lasting, with courtezans going and coming
without hindrance,
With the willow-flakes falling like snow,
And the vermilioned girls getting drunk about sunset,
And the waters a hundred feet deep reflecting green
eyebrows—
Eyebrows painted green are a fine sight in young
moonlight,
Gracefully painted—and the girls singing back at
each other,
Dancing in transparent brocade,
And the wind lifting the song, and interrupting it,
Tossing it up under the clouds.

And all this comes to an end,
And is not again to be met with.
I went up to the court for examination,
Tried Layu's luck, offered the Choyu song,
And got no promotion,
And went back to the East Mountains white-headed.

And once again we met, later, at the South Bridge
head.
And then the crowd broke up—you went north to
San palace.
And if you ask how I regret that parting?
It is like the flowers falling at spring's end,
 confused, whirled in a tangle.
What is the use of talking! And there is no end of
talking-
There is no end of things in the heart.

I call in the boy,
Have him sit on his knees to write and seal this,
And I send it a thousand miles, thinking.