

“Letters Home: Susan Glaspell’s Experience of Delphi”

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Ozieblo’s paper explored the connection between Susan Glaspell and Delphi from a biographical point of view, using her letters home – to her mother, to Edna Kenton and to the Hapgoods – as well as her literary oeuvre, in particular the 1927 biography she wrote of her husband George Cram Cook, *The Road to the Temple*, and her 1929 novel, *Fugitive’s Return*, both of which cast light on the relevance of her Greek experience to her own life. Glaspell’s letters to friends such as the Hapgoods reveal the difficulties she faced while in Delphi that can only be glimpsed in *The Road to the Temple*: isolation from the culture she knew, inability to fully communicate with the local people, the stress of caring for a husband on his “hang-over” days and the horror of nursing him during his fatal illness. On the other hand, reading Glaspell’s letters to her mother, we feel that the modern approximation of the ancient culture of Greece she experienced there allowed her to reconnect with her Iowan roots. This is richly reflected in the cathartic experiences of her protagonist Irma, the eponymic “fugitive” who escapes from a failed suicide attempt by traveling to Delphi and there, inspired by the people and the setting, reexamines her past in the American Midwest of the early 20th century in order to return home once again to her ancestral “house on the hill.” It thus becomes evident that Delphi was a cathartic experience for Glaspell herself, marking the end of her brilliant Provincetown playwriting career, the end of her marriage to Cook, and the beginning of a new life that was perhaps in many ways a return to her own origins as well.

“Susan Glaspell’s Greece: the People, the Place, the Past”

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When Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook sailed for Greece on March 1, 1922, Glaspell was merely taking a sabbatical from her busy life as a playwright with the Provincetown Players to fulfill her husband’s lifelong dream. She could not guess that she would end up living in Delphi for two years, nor that the experience would profoundly affect her and her work. Carpentier’s paper discussed how the people, the place, and the mythological past of Delphi inspired an array of Glaspell’s writings from 1922-1929. In “Dwellers on Parnassos,” published in *The New Republic* in 1923, Glaspell recreates the pre-Homeric pastoral life she experienced in Delphi and at the villagers’ idyllic summer retreat, Kalania, farther up the mountain. “Dwellers on Parnassos” was also inspired by the tragedy Glaspell witnessed in 1922 of over 10,000 Greek refugees from Turkey arriving homeless in Salonika, and it is a moving elegy for the destruction of the centuries-old traditions of Greece by modernity and war. In an unpublished poem in her papers at the New York Public Library, Glaspell describes standing in the Temple of Apollo, her hand resting on a broken column: “I live again in what lived then, / And what lived then moves now in me.” Such intimacy with the ruins is reflected in Glaspell’s long story “The Faithless Shepherd,” published in *The Cornhill* in 1926, a brilliant modernist tale of a young outcast shepherd, a conflation of Dionysus and Christ as avatar of the Frazerian dying god. Finally, the Temple of Apollo, Dionysian theater, Eleusinian Sacred Way, *omphalos* and Oracle, are all brought to life and peopled particularly with the village women Glaspell observed, in her novel *Fugitive’s Return*, a modernist *tour de*

force in its use of mythical allusion to universalize one woman's adventure amongst the *archai* of Delphi.

“Female Charioteers in Susan Glaspell’s Plays: The Spirit of Delphi and Aristotle’s *Poetics* in *Inheritors*, *The Verge*, and *The Comic Artist*”

Noelia Hernando-Real, La Salle College-Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Susan Glaspell's female protagonists have been considered to greater or lesser extent “the most distinguished achievements in character creation in the entire range of American drama. They are rebels, every one of them – idealistic rebels, and Miss Glaspell bravely centres them in conflicts siding with the idealistic minority, in its struggle with the overwhelming legions who serve Mammon and mediocrity” (Eugene Solow, “America’s Great Woman Dramatist: Susan Glaspell,” *The World*, February 9, 1930: np). In keeping with Solow’s early criticism, this paper discusses Madeline in *Inheritors* (1921), Claire in *The Verge* (1921), and Eleanor in the lesser known and generally rejected *The Comic Artist* (1927), as modern American female “charioteers” – protagonists who drive themselves against any obstacle. Madeline is portrayed as a female charioteer who confronts family and government; Claire does the same against traditional art and society, and Eleanor against female competitors and gendered ideas of female passiveness and submission. As Hernando-Real’s paper discussed, these characters comprise and revamp in different ways the “Spirit of Delphi” that Glaspell believed in so utterly as part of her renewed idea of American tragedy, and analyzes how Glaspell adopts and challenges for her feminist agenda the three maxims of the “Spirit of Delphi,” which according to mythology were engraved in a column of the Temple of Apollo: “know yourself,” “nothing in excess” and “a pledge, and ruin is near”. This analysis of the modern female charioteer in Glaspell’s plays included consideration of Glaspell’s adaptation of Greek tragic conventions for the North American stage, as her protagonists each go through the tragic processes of *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, and *pathos*, while the *agons* they experience arouse pity and fear in an audience whose demands for catharsis are not always satisfied.

The Noble Peasant: Humanism and Primitivism in Glaspell’s Life and Work

Michael Winetsky, City University of New York

He was a violent looking-man, and simple. It was as if civilization, our world, had not been. We were afraid of not doing the right thing. He was so right.
- *The Road to the Temple*

He looked like the great of the earth. Noble. Noble like the forests -- and the Mississippi -- and the stars... Sometimes I feel as if the land itself has got a mind that the land would rather have had the Indians.
- *Inheritors*

While living in Spruce huts, high on Mount Parnassos in the summer of 1922, Susan Glaspell and her husband received a visit from their friend Elias Scarmoush, a shepherd who tended his sheep in the mountain. The appearance of this man affected her as much of Delphi would affect her: she felt in contact with an ancient life and ancient practices more in harmony with nature than anything she had known in the United States.

Glaspell already had been thinking about Romantic primitivism before she came to Greece, depicting the Native American Chief Black Hawk in *Inheritors* as a type of noble savage. In light of the critiques of the noble savage in anthropology, Glaspell's visit to Greece might seem a particularly problematic example of a kind of subtle racism. How do we reconcile Glaspell's primitivism with the ethic of cross cultural understanding that informs much of her oeuvre? Winetsky's paper gleaned from her writings what Glaspell learned from her residence in Greece and argued that, contrary to a universalist primitivism, Glaspell's encounter with the primitive in Greece should be seen as an aspect of her pluralistic cultural holism. Throughout her fiction and plays, Glaspell can be seen wrestling with classical, Christian, and scientific explanations of existence. As such, Glaspell's decision to reside in Greece is the apex of her desire to understand the place of humanity in the environment and the cultural differences that fracture our relationship to it.