

1 Eugene E. Lemcioⁱ, “The Lion-Lamb of Lviv (a fantasy in verse)”, *Theology* 119.6
 2 (November–December, 2016): 443–445

3
 4 The city’s pride—of lions
 5 made in any style, size, and time
 6 for over seven hundred years
 7 have come to dominate
 8 each thoroughfare and boulevard.
 9 Its shops are filled with mugs and
 10 tourist bric-a-brac emblazoned with
 11 that noble face and form.

12
 13 The Leontopolis Hotel
 14 had been the site of growing pains:
 15 expansion meant upheaval
 16 for both guests and citizens.
 17 This situation worsened
 18 when the trencher struck
 19 an unforgiving block of stone
 20 that seemed to be an animal (or two?)—
 21 the law demanding that all digging stop
 22 until an archeologist could estimate
 23 both date and provenance.

24
 25 The rubble cleared by practiced gentle use
 26 of spade and brush, a builder’s crane
 27 conscripted from another pit
 28 began to extricate the marble objects
 29 from their earthen womb
 30 (a double harness, not a noose,
 31 securing trunks and legs).

32
 33 The weight of unaccustomed, awkward freight
 34 soon took its toll on fraying cable,
 35 squealing winch, and grinding rusted gears.
 36 A mist of acrid fumes arose from overheating engine oil,
 37 dispersing randomly throughout the anxious crowd
 38 that hushed as swaying forms—
 39 akin to those condemned to gallows’ fate—
 40 were safely landed on the city square.

41
 42 A jaded populace should hardly care
 43 about another lion added to the mix.
 44 But this was new:
 45 against the muscled cat there stood
 46 a lamb that seemed at first conjoined.
 47 But this illusion soon gave way
 48 to something more complex and exquisite:
 49 his royal diadem held captive
 50 by her crown of thorns.

51

52 So much was clear enough.
 53 But did the calloused paw mean to caress?
 54 Or had its claws produced
 55 that ugly gash across the throat?
 56 And were the stare and furrowed brow meant to intimidate;
 57 or did they show concern for what was done?
 58 No matter, since the victim's eyes
 59 returned the gaze with neither terror nor reproach.

60
 61 At once the statue gave offense:
 62 a noted critic called the thing "grotesque".
 63 "What Gorgon could have borne—
 64 and loved—a nightmare brood as this?
 65 One look at her and they were turned to stone
 66 while nursing at the breast!"
 67 A milder academic claimed,
 68 "No similar design has ever graced
 69 a banner, shield, or crest."

70
 71 Disgruntled bishops tried to blame
 72 an ancient secret sect of priests
 73 who had allegedly reneged on solemn vows
 74 to church—and state.
 75 "These renegades had made their mission clear:
 76 defang, de-mane, dethrone
 77 the King of Beasts, the jungle's lord,
 78 worse still the Tribe of Judah's messianic sign!
 79 Who would not rather hear the echoes of a manly roar
 80 than suffer bleating, bleeding sounds of sacrifice?

81
 82 "What should be done to exile this monstrosity?
 83 Entomb it in a locked museum vault, a dank cathedral crypt
 84 or let an auctioneer promote a piece of kitsch to lowest bid?
 85 No, better still: adorn a shirt, a towel, scarf, and mug."

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88
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