

I have slowly been going through the submissions to *Hemlock 50*, and have been trying, in my own mind, to piece together the complicated persona that was William Teunis. I have been starting with his own writings, and just finished *The Golden Time*, his MFA thesis based on two Shakespearean Plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III*. Certainly, there is much to discuss here, but I would just mention that my own most powerful memory of Mr. Teunis was his performance of Richard III in our 11<sup>th</sup> grade English class. Who could forget coming into the dimmed room with Teunis sitting at his desk, dressed in a cape, humped over, and delivering that famous, unsettling monologue. I still get shivers remembering it. I mention this now because obviously he identified with this strange, enigmatic character in powerful ways to have made it a centerpiece of his classroom as well as of his dissertation.

I also read *Ms. Snell*, the last entry in *Hemlock*, also by Mr. Teunis, and was immediately struck by a strange correspondence it had to a story I had recently heard on NPR called "*The Man in the Well*" by Ira Shr, which also involves a person, here a man, trapped in a well and discovered by children. I was very moved by this piece when I heard it on the radio, and am glad to bring it up for discussion, or at least point it out so others might listen to it. Certainly both stories are very dark, albeit with strikingly different views of children and childhood. Certainly the Teunis piece partakes more of the romantic view of childhood that the kids are born good and innocent and (wise?) and are corrupted by so called civilization, here in the persona of an ultimately evil, though well-meaning librarian.

I must say that in my almost 40 years in academia, the librarians I have known and become friends with are nothing like Ms. Snell. Indeed, at my institution of higher learning, the librarians were always in the forefront of defending banned books, banned visual art (we had a huge debate over whether life drawings from the art classes should be exhibited in the college lobby). And I must say that over the years the librarians were always on the forefront of defending freedom of speech and expression. Obviously not Teunis' view.

The Ira Shr piece does not take a romantic view towards childhood. At the same time, it is strangely nuanced – I won't go into details, but leave it to the reader (or preferably, listener – as it is very effective in the audio version).

Thinking about these two pieces together – *Ms. Snell* and the *Man in the Well*, I was left pondering the differences in their point of view. Did it have to do with the times? (Teunis as part of the '60's anti-establishment movement written in '63.) Then, was the *Man in the Well* somehow representative of the '90's? apparently the original was written in '96, although it was recently produced on NPR. Or, did the pieces reflect more personal views of humankind. I must say I found both of them eerily disturbing, and wondered what others might think. It is 17 minutes.

Here is the link:

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/27/the-cruelty-of-children?act=2#play>

I have just ordered *Richard III* to rewatch it in the light of *The Golden Time*. Looking forward to hearing others' thoughts about it at the Reunion.

Thanks again, Ron.

Carole