

The plot against the giant

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The poem talks about three girls plotting against a giant. The first girl plans that when his yokel comes maundering, whetting his hacker, the first girl will run before him. She will diffuse the civilest of odors out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers. The girl expects that this will check the giant. The second girls plan is to directly run before the giant.

She will arch cloths besprinkled with colors that are as small as fish-eggs. The threads of the cloth will abash the giant. Lastly the third girl calls the giant *la pauvre*. She will also run before the giant with a curious puffing. He expects the giant to bend his ear to her puffing and that's when she plans to whisper heavenly labials in a world of gutturals. This will undo the giant.

The Plot of against the Giant is a poem published among Steven Wallace's other poems under the book *Harmonium* which was published in 1923. The poem has a lot of playfulness and imagination but one would wonder who Wallace's giant was. He could mean someone else or the giant could be himself.

The poem consists of three parts. This could mean three approaches or three aspects or three techniques or three different experiences or stories all together. First line goes when this yokel comes maundering, yokel means an uneducated person, they are also known as bumpkins standing for unsophisticated country people. In fiction, yokels are usually depicted as gullible and easily conned. On the contrary, they may be viewed as straightforward and simplistic, and therefore seeing through sophisticated pretenses.

Maundering can mean either wander aimlessly or talk indistinctly or speak rapidly. So the first line mean the first girl is waiting when the giant whom she calls a yokel comes to wander. The poem continues, whetting his hacker, I shall run before him, Diffusing the civilest odors Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers. It will check him. Whetting is sharpening. With the continuation, the first paragraph suggests that the first girl will run to the giant when he is wandering without care sharpening his hacker. She plans to run to him and pour out and spread freely the nicest smelling odors from geraniums and unsmelled flowers and this will check the giant.

The second girl says, I shall run before him, Arching cloths besprinkled with colors As small as fish-eggs. The threads. Will abash him. This suggests that she will run to the giant bending clothes toward the giant sprinkled with colors as small as fish-eggs. The threads will disconcert and embarrass the giant.

While the third girl says, Oh, la... le pauvre! I shall run before him, With a curious puffing. He will bend his ear then. I shall whisper Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals. It will undo him. This suggests that she will run to the giant with an interesting but short forceful exhalation of breath or a short sudden gust of wind.

This will make the giant bend his ear. The third girl will then whisper heavenly labials. Labials are consonants articulated either with both lips (bilabial articulation) or with the lower lip and the upper teeth. Sounds like this will undo the giant.

The poem has a lot of imagination, symbolism and subtlety. It even has playfulness. Each girl represents certain dealing or a plan: the subtlety of fragrances, the colorfulness of the besprinkled cloths and the magic of sound. Another way of understanding the poem is seeing the visions of the poet himself. The Giant could be Steven Wallace himself and the gist of the poem is basically women plotting against him. If Wallace had been fond of women during his days – we can only speculate. He must have composed the poem out from pure imagination or thoughtful observation or it could be that the poem came out from a true-to-life experience.

With this premise we will then come to view the poem differently and perhaps more maturely. As I've mentioned the three girls can mean different approaches of woman to a man or how woman respond to man.

Before we get to the details of the poem let's touch a little on the word giant. Why Wallace did choose his hero to be a giant? Why not a winged-angel or perhaps Superman? It could be possible that in Wallace mind he perceives men in general as giants, of course not in the physical sense but in the gender sensitive sense. Another point of consideration is when the poem was created.

The poem was written when society was highly patriarchal. It could be very possible that Wallace views were highly influenced by a male-dominated society that time. This could be the reason why he sees men in general or himself as super beings – superior to ordinary man. He used a giant as his hero in the poem to portray this supremacy. However, Wallace was aware of the consequences of using a giant for a hero or maybe it is exactly what he

intends. Just like Goliath in the Bible, though he is a giant he was defeated by a child in the person of David. Wallace might have seen this perspective and opted to mold his character into a Giant and multiplied his David into three.

Evident in the poem is Wallace's bias on woman. He used the word plot against –and to plot against is something adversarial. As upfront as this title, the walls have been divided. Wallace then sees women as the enemy. The three dames represent a battle Wallace's giant needs to overcome. First is the art of subtlety - using the sense of smell. It is common knowledge that scents and perfumes are women essentials. As much as women loves wearing it - men loves smelling it. The poem speaks of this with the first girl using all the civilest odors from geraniums to the unsmelled flowers. This suggest that the girl used the scents to check the giant out. She used the scents to weaken the giant. We should take note that the first girl was careful when to release these odors - only when the yokel is maundering. It is not done all the time, timing is everything.

Second is the use of color and of clothes. If this is effective in taming a man then it is much effective now. It doesn't only tame or abash a man it can be used to intimidate though today's playing field doesn't play much on the color nor on the cloth but a lot has been attributed to style. I would say attitude counts too.

Third is the use of sound. Sound can have different effects on people. It depends on the kind and quality of sound we hear. The poem speaks of heavenly labial sounds. To me this suggests sensuality. These sounds can be

the ahhs and the ohhs or can be a moan or a groan that surely is very powerful letting the third girl call the giant *la pauvre*. It wouldn't be a wonder because labial sounds are mostly guttural thus instinctive. The effects of these sounds are expectedly instinctive in nature too.

The Plot Against the Giant

First Girl

When this yokel comes maundering,
Whetting his hacker,
I shall run before him,
Diffusing the civilest odors
Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers.
It will check him.

Second Girl

I shall run before him,
Arching cloths besprinkled with colors
As small as fish-eggs.
The threads
Will abash him.

Third Girl

Oh, *la... le pauvre!*
I shall run before him,
With a curious puffing.
He will bend his ear then.

I shall whisper

Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals.

It will undo him.

(From “ Harmonium,” 1923)