



10-1-1986

Hamlet at Cairo

Virginia Ellen Baker

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Recommended Citation

Baker, Virginia Ellen (1986) "Hamlet at Cairo," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 26 : Iss. 4 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol26/iss4/12>

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Hamlet at Cairo

Where the ghost watches the moon rise over Ceti's pyramid

I could stay in the grave, Horatio,
but give myself to water more than earth.

The Nile shivers with a ghost or two.
It's in the blood, from father to son,

that being dead, we may be what we like.

He ate the body of vengeance.
Me? I claim the tree at Ceti's grave.
A fitting throne—

I could spread a branch or two
as easily as Ophelia's skirts,

sit on the bough to watch her rise,
and catch the shimmering tail of asps
knotting over his veiled eyes.

Goose! Not him. Let dead kings lie.
I mean the moon,
and Ceti—

See how she pulls herself against his side?
One sphere—a breast, a womb, an open eye—

Hst, Horatio—history is made tonight.

*The Pharaoh has preserved his skin,
but she must do the leavening.*

A pretty ditty.
I should sing it over water.

There. She's in him now.
 Let no mother, but a lover
 tend him, kings.

You or I could not buy his lot,
 not for all the fish in Denmark
 or the foreskins of two true servants.

The Greeks once named that woman's face.
 No, not Helen. What was the word?
 But then, the Greeks, they died as a race.

So? That was Ptolemy's folly,
 another, mine—

Delusion will get you
 six princes, no more
 to bear you up.

Mark it, Horatio. Make no slaves
 of gods and sundry skeletons.

Athena! Or was it Artemis?
 An archer, I think—

No matter. Dust is to dust.

The Hebrews kept their god alive
 and called him only that he was—

then said, "*who art thou,
 that we should worship thee?*"

And what have I called virgins,
 that they might live, rise
 over me?

How grandly these Egyptians failed.

He is dead.
 But he holds and loves her yet.

Grave robbers take the rest.

Watch close, Horatio.
A woman's kiss could do no better—

At that final point,
as she breaks free
and rises whole above him,

she leaves one drop of honey
to linger from between her lips.

Her light is in him. See?
That point where he is no more
than the silhouette against her,

you would almost think he lived again.

—Virginia Ellen Baker

Virginia Ellen Baker is a poet living in Provo, Utah.