

# THE MAN WHO HATED IRONY



D A V I D   B E R G M A N

He seethed at the injustice of it:  
the reader stuffed with superior knowledge  
while the characters were fed a thin gruel  
of misinformation that led them nowhere.

The man who hated irony scorned the critics  
who held this trope above all others;  
just as he loathed his so-called friends  
sniggering behind his back as he moved  
from one unhappy romance to another,  
confident that they understood his weakness  
for needy but withholding lovers better than he did,  
and reading his compulsions as some variety of Fate.

Could life know more about the living  
than the living knew about themselves?  
Perhaps. But it still didn't make it right.  
Knowledge should be universal or not known at all.

He came to believe secrets were the cause of war:  
each side protecting itself against its ignorance of the other.

If only knowledge wasn't limited to the privileged few  
we could live in peaceful harmony  
or at least subject to the same forces of chance.  
The way he saw it, the inequalities of knowledge  
were worse than the inequalities of wealth,  
but given Wall Street was no more than an insider's game,

there was little to choose between them.  
He welcomed government surveillance of his emails  
if that would mean a level playing field  
where he and the titans of finance  
would be forced to reveal themselves simultaneously.  
He had no doubts the striptease would be long, drawn out,  
the opera gloves removed finger by elegant finger,  
the fan, expertly maneuvered to cover the flesh,  
but in the end they'd both be naked to the world.  
He scorned playwrights who gave to their audiences  
an understanding to which the actors were blind.  
Would someone for once get up at the start of *Oedipus*  
and fill the lead in: "For god's sake, it's you.  
who's causing the plague. It's not your fault, for how  
were you to know the rash actions of your youth  
would come back and bite you."  
But why are we so sure that Oedipus is the culprit?  
Couldn't it be that some toxin is polluting the city?  
heavy metals from the blacksmith's forge  
somehow seeping into the ground water,  
a scientific explanation that Sophocles  
ignored because he was so puffed up with pride?  
Perhaps, he concluded, the greatest irony would be  
that we were mistaken all along, taken in  
by Tiresias' jumble of gossip and jealousy  
and that we should be the ones packing out bags  
and gouging out our eyes while Jocasta and the king  
prepare for a slow dance at Antigone's wedding?