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Living Texts

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Living Texts

Mary Dengler

Why read these books again, why call
These works sublime? What makes them strong
Enough to climb into your inward eye,
Line your summer-reading bag, survive among
The treasures rescued from your burning house?
Some say humanities, the liberal arts, have died,
Assisted suicide; others grouse that literatures
Are murdered by dissecting knives of science,
Dismembered, deconstructed for their evidence
Of power politics, suffocated slowly under
Theoretical analysis, suffered paralysis
From having living truths extracted
To fill blanks on tests for academic measure.

But mourning their demise, I saw mild
Delight, heard a vocal gasp when heroes
From another age climbed outside the text, erupted
Boldly from a digital page, struggled
Through a flaming wall, confronted
Brutal boys and armored men, crossed
A frozen sea with nothing but a friend
For warmth, saved the Goldfinch from a tomb,
A blind girl from a bomb, defied malignant power
To plant a colony beyond a distant star,
Faced death for something dearer
than a single life—an hour of showing
What we are and should be doing here.