

Frozen in Late Middle Age

Matthew Hooton

It's not my fault. Definitely not. On account that I did not ask that team of anthro-whatevers and paleo-whatevers and the two small men with brown skin who carried equipment to dig my frozen body from the glacier, bring me to the lab at the bottom of the mountain, thaw me, and teach me not to be terrified of a mirror, which I still am by the way but don't tell the people in white clothing this on account of I am embarrassed and am not exactly thrilled to be some kind of experiment or historical miracle or captive animal. Maybe all of those things. I mean none of them. I mean I am not exactly happy.

If I made them sick because of the sick I was carrying when I got sick and left my family and climbed the glacier to keep away from them and be sick alone, that's on the team that thawed me. On account that if they had understood that the ochre pigment in the animal skins I was wearing meant: be cautious! Stay away! Sick here! Bad sick here and if you are not cautious and do not stay away you will also carry the sick and be forced into exile to wander like an animal away from everyone and everything you love because you are responsible and because your wife Susan told you that you had to do this and that the best place would be the glacier so everyone could see the red warning most easily, even though the glacier is very slippery and there are hidden crevasses and suchlike underfoot. Thanks for that Susan. Thanks.

But the individuals that did the thawing, who did not understand the warning I was literally wearing on my body, also did not understand my talking, on account that they are not like me exactly, and also on account that tongues do not appreciate being frozen for a very long time, though how long exactly I can't say. Get it? Sorry. It's not funny. Because I couldn't tell them I had a bad sick, and even if I could have, it would have been too late, on account that they thawed me and the sick at the same time. This was very stupid of them, but I remember their ancestors also being stupid in this same way, the goat symbol, eggplant symbolers. One of the females in the lab taught me how to talk using symbols, which appeared in a hand-held flat pool of water that is like a mirror but not and that reflected or projected its own unknowable depths like shadows in colour. An eggplant is a vegetable, but it doesn't mean vegetable, it means intercourse. This is unsettling, on account of eggplants are purple, which is the colour of

butterflies covered in ash, and also frostbite. But the goat just means goat, so that's clear. I always said those small-foreheaded, thin-boned goat eggplanters were going to be the end of us, on account that they spent so much time eggplanting anything that moved and not enough time hunting and gathering and suchlike.

When they stopped coming to the lab I was happy at first, because I am tired and because I had the bad luck to freeze myself by falling into a giant crevasse in late middle-age, thanks again Susan, and I am self-conscious of my hair loss and all of the scars on my shoulders and arms from wrestling animals and running from animals through thorns and suchlike. But then I got hungry and still no one came and I wandered through the lab until I found one of them coughing blood into the place they put their waste, the only smell that smells like a smell here, and I recognised the coughing and blood as the bad sick on account that I have it too but am not bird-boned and weak and so am still living even after freezing and thawing and dealing with the polished ice called a mirror that might be a shaman trick because it is me and also not me.

My favourite symbol, which the female with no eyebrows or forehead to speak of who is probably dead now taught me, is of a person lying in a bed with a cloud above them. This does not mean that they are sleeping outside at risk of weather or wild beasts or suchlike, but dreaming, and they were very interested in whether or not I dreamed while I was in the ice, and of course I did, maybe non-stop, but I could not tell them this on account that some of my dreams involved eggplants and wives other than Susan who I am still afraid of and always will be. Shut up. I know. And also because to properly speak of dreams requires crushed berries and mineral pigments and the wall of a cave. Everyone knows this except the individuals in the lab who are probably dead from the terrible sick they thawed and so now know nothing and can't speak at all and do not paint their dreams on caves that are protected from the weather and so will probably be forgotten by whatever survives the bad and old sick they thawed.

The tiny suns and stars on the roof of the lab have gone out now, and the man in the other room has stopped coughing and also breathing. If nothing changes very soon I will take the small flat item from his clothing and use it to open the moving entrance near me that I have seen others open in that same way. Then I will climb back up the mountain even if the weather is very cold and I will return to the glacier because glaciers are forever, and I will look for the cave where I painted dreams with my son on my shoulders and Susan passing us colours on sticks, and where when we were finished accounting for the great beasts and our fantasies of killing them that did

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not involve eggplants, we covered our palms in ochre and charcoal, and berries of blue and pink, and pressed our warm, hairy hands to the walls.

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