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Fantasia: On a Tapestry

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JOHN PAUKER

FANTASIA: ON A TAPESTRY

(Love and War Depicted)

Boy, a thousand of the fair
 There fell, fought there on that calm tapestry
 —H. NEMEROV

Hobgoblins on a Gobelin playing hob
 With apothegms of one and the same fabric made—
 Impious imps with armor-knob on knob
 Love-locked: flux and forever flexed in a green glade
 Where lordling lovers clasp, clashing like shields—
 They adumbrate both victory and loss,
 Refuting the repute of playing fields.

A rout of arms upon each stud or boss,
 This fix and mix of forces cap-a-pie
 Is shatter-clout disruption of the rule
 That makes war an advance of policy.
 How disengage hale fellow from the fool?
 How tell the conquering hero from the craven?
 Distinguish hail of weal from wail of woe?

Alas when anarchy becomes safe haven,
 Alack when lord is lout, likewise when friend is foe!—
 Amid the din of charge and countercharge,
 Amid the swirl of thrash, crash and withdrawal,
 Amid the merge of red with the green marge,
 A thrust of dust both court and courtiers does appall:
 I see the boy's face on the battlefield. . . .

That is not, Sire, at all the same as saying
 I see the battlefield on the boy's face—
 Therefore, Seigneur, an end to all such slaying:
 Love is the host of lords, O Lord of Hosts,
 So now I lay me down upon my shield
 And beg, Milord, no more hobgoblin ghosts
 Made of whole cloth. Pax, perforce I yield.