

The New Criterion

Poems

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Deus ex machina

by [A E Stallings](#)

Because we were good at entanglements, but not
Resolution, and made a mess of plot,
Because there was no other way to fulfil
The ancient prophesy, because the will
Of the gods demanded punishment, because
Neither recognized who the other was,
Because there was no difference between
A tragic ending and a comic scene,
Because the play was running out of time,
Because the mechanism of the sublime
Was in good working order, but needed using,
Because it was a script not of our choosing,
Because we were actors, because we knew for a fact
We were only actors, because we could not act.

A E Stallings's latest collection of poetry is *Hapax* (TriQuarterly).

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