

1st July 2024

Lovers

“A more gracious, spacious and compassionate embrace.”

Ken Wilber, *Collected Works* (2000)

I was meeting a friend in Buchanan Street Bus Station in Glasgow. Arriving a little early, I nearly bumped into a couple who were embracing in a passionate clinch. I was about to apologise, when I realised this was no ordinary couple, or no *real* couple, indeed. For it was a life-sized bronze statue, right in the middle of the Bus Station concourse.

I discovered that it was by the renowned sculptor – and aptly named – John Clinch. Cleverly entitled, “Winchers’ Stance”, it was created in 1994 for Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. The statue depicts a couple who could be meeting, or parting. And they’re certainly doing what comes naturally: winching – that wonderful Glaswegian description of a courting couple. In their permanent embrace, they’re enormously happy, and as I looked more closely, I saw a tear rolling down the woman’s cheek.

The statue was named in a competition in Glasgow’s *Evening Times*. Out of 600 entries, the winner was Susan Ritchie, whose suggestion of “Winchers’ Stance” was more than appropriate. The sculptor, John Clinch, from Folkestone in Kent, has won many awards through his sculpting career. A calm, often reserved man, his humour could be “delivered with a dead pan face”. Very Glasgow! He died in 2001, leaving behind a legacy of great work that brings a smile, and perhaps sometimes a tear of joy.

Meeting or parting, there was something powerfully demonstrative about that “gracious, spacious and compassionate embrace” in Buchanan Street Bus Station. The woman held tightly, kicks one foot up behind her with light abandon; the man, his case dropped to the ground, gives all his energy and emotion to the love of his life. Slender female arms around a man’s neck, with eyes tight shut to hold the moment; strong, safe arms over a woman’s shoulders, as a man gazes at his love as if he can’t believe his good fortune. Two young lovers lost in an eternal embrace, oblivious to the world that whirls and changes round about them.

Far from apologising for disturbing the winchers’ embrace, I stood and watched them till my friend arrived – and gave thanks for meetings and partings, and the embrace of lovers that makes it all worthwhile.

A prayer for today

Meeting or parting, my love and your Love will always matter. Amen