

EXCERPTS FROM A WORK IN PROGRESS

GEOFFREY HILL

III

Wild desire (Pound) conjured to be *black lightning*
Take these strange-willed odes as of his clairvoyance
Stilted offspring tripped by electric discharge
Kicking themselves up

Or as some tell Munchhausens syndrome hauling
Self from grimpen by your own tight-stitched hairpiece
Welcome lost brother of eternal credit
Knew you from Adam

Something scarce-caught instance we have abiding
As with first love though there are other windows
Infinite starlight yet a key to purpose
Stark beyond hazard

191

Tacitus self-willing the Emperor
Trajan makes one template of definition
Also holds clouds ropy and barred together
Through which Jove chunters

Truces pacts ruins fix the pledge of stalling
Time • Advances made thus against infarction
I would not have you in another time frame
Raging your heart out

Belting a tocsin better left imagined
Metaphors grand bell in its trope of towers
Out of temper—taking wild swings at people—
Sullenly dumbled down

IV

Have I cloned Horace or reduced myself to
Weeping plasma • Never again so rightly
Not again those *marvellous early poems*
Lately acknowledged

How the sea-lightning with a flash at hazard
Cleft the lanterned yard into pelting angles
Had we been there had you then turned towards me
By this remembered

O my sad love clad in our dark declensions
Never once naked to the other given
Honey milk spices of that night forgathered
Lost in summation

192

Mirrors fading where the bright-brutish roses
Held themselves royally akin their nature
Berkeley could have granted us our existence
Had we but known him

Still suffices language its constitution
Solipsist somehow must acknowledge this • Not
Quite enough said when what was said is nothing
To this recital

Here is my good voice you may well remember
Making up these things • It is what I do • Hark
Love how cross-rhythms are at stake to purpose
From the beginning

V

I could not name Jericho what she stands for
Call it stubborn harlotry crass denial
Let her walls tremble to the aggro trumpets
Braying the mortar

Hides from our eyes God in a certain placement
Worries his self-satisfied bulk the indis-
Criminate vengeance of the Flood and blithely
Switches the Rainbow

Ruach cried up but it is *racha* taunts me
Earthly things fall back upon Sheol sometime
How redeem live prophecies thence good question
Short of an answer

Nominating Israel here as rogue state:
So it must be justified though unwisely
Some slur Abram Chaldee incorporate his
Horror of darkness

193

Striking praise songs Judith and Deborah spanned
And the dancers • Prophecys tunnel vision
Full rendition zeroing lethal flashes
Children of Canaan

Ruach cried up but it is *racha* haunts me
Earthly things fall back upon Sheol sometime
Best avoid Yahweh not to have Jehovah
Riddle the whirlwind

Geoffrey Hill