SAMPLER

John Hall
Other books by John Hall

Poems
Between the Cities
Days
Meaning Insomnia
Malolactic Ferment
Couch Grass
Repressed Intimations
Else Here: Selected Poems
Couldn’t You?
The Week’s Bad Groan
Interscriptions (with Peter Hughes)
Keepsache (a companion selection to Else Here)
A Salutation to Poetry (with Emily Critchley)
Later (with Ian Tyson)

Fiction
Apricot Pages

Essays
Thirteen Ways of Talking about Performance Writing
Essays on Performance Writing, Poetics and Poetry
Volume 1: On Performance Writing, with Pedagogical Sketches;
Volume 2: Writing towards Writing and Reading: On Poetics, with Implicated Readings
John Hall

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Wrong from the middle

state of the person
address in which
a selection of
bad moments
has expunged the
good it is calm
now only just
away from where some
pasts stillquake & in
an unquiet world on
which the retired
depend others
fight it out Libya for
example but
bring it home too to
hold on or to hold
on to or to get hold of
some share in decisions
perhaps goods &
flows some divi
dend in action no
longer for this
awkward assemblage
that angles the left
over pieces to catch
a tune in the air that might
be right for the rough
times ahead what
do you do with where
you find yourself
alone faced it
seems with a choice as
between distracted
attention just
as though you were
*needed* saying
nothing and the awk
wardness of speaking
where there is no
reply
wrong not
from the start
because there never
was a start in which ‘you’
could have been wrong
your tiny let’s imagine
pinkish white
body born into
history that is to say
in a colonised land
as though there were any other you the coloniser only because that’s where you came in & at the time didn’t know much least of all consequences certainly not ambiguity in the word ‘agent’ where there was no oil & the lure was copper which was here too in these woods enough for the employment of say a hundred people but not to compete with new markets (Chile?) ‘you do not owe yourself to the others’ I said then, ‘how could you?’ and now ‘how could you have said that?’ but right to have been wrong perhaps & really
a disguised self
direction *do not*
own your self the one
as it were accruing
capital hop
ign to live off what
is *between* (interest) and
what is to be *divided*
(dividend) and no
these aren’t gods
nodding their assent your
self dizzy with numinous
debt just now
called credit be
lieve it or not you’ve
got to believe
to owe or can that too
be redeemed by re
versing the terms where
the literal
just won’t detach
from metaphor so precisely
in debt not perhaps to
the others should they
be nameable after all that
is what a self might
be in one kind
of history the heating oil in its bunded tank 70% up in price since the last fill dripping continuously ‘down fine-gauge copper tubing’ into the house for controlled use to which others do I owe my self now ‘it would be foolish to regret who we are’ I said wrong from the middle
as a said place

the negation keeps, on the soles of its shoes,
the dust of the ground it left behind  (Emmanuel Levinas)

what is it
that is not
written here

word
touched
body

and all the bodies
saying

the world is said
said Emmanuel Levinas

world
touched
bodies

in case
in the said world
there is a world
not yet said

or one
this one
where the said
is not
quite world
everything that is the case
today

in the sung world
the figured world
the said world

imagined to be the case
said
to be imagined

sighed
signed
as desire

but not desired
to be not

no
he said
a willed minus
swells
no he said
is more than

(different at the food-table, perhaps)

every subject’s debt
to the one nearby

he who has lost his place

dead is the no-response [sans réponse]
said Levinas
no nothing to say
because I do not see your face

or you choose
not to see my face

replies that are not replies
and are thus more than replies
the call given
a call
for a given
response
tactical fakes
planted to raise the value
of the genuine

real ladies don’t buy fakes
it says
only the genuine
genu, knee (a father acknowledges
paternity of a new-born child
by placing it on his knee)

this act is
precarious, obtained by prayer
when the call was fear

the one-reply of a father’s body

alternatively
genus: birth, race, stock, kind
either way
a precarious call
on authenticity
the balance reflex
that stabilizes the eyes
it is normal
to feel a little dizzy
adjust your speed
so that the writing
just steps
out of focus
at the limit
of tolerance
you could stand
in front
of a mirror or window

unusual stimulation
of the vestibular receptors and semi-circular canals also can
give rise to sensory distortions in visual and motor activity
the resulting discord often leads
to nausea and disorientation

a damaged balance system has little ability to repair itself.