Ha Ha
Also by Andrew Jordan:

St Catherine’s Buried Chapel (Taxus, 1987)
The Mute Bride (Stride, 1998)
Andrew Jordan

Ha Ha

Shearsman Books
Exeter
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Giggle

The lynchet shook, as if with laughter. He had said
that from the tump –
looking west,
below the azimuth,
at the equinox –
we would see
a holy script
edged into place
by shadows and light.
We saw words
greeked into words,
the first text always
obscured by the rest.
“...and all interpretations
became, to us,
just territory – something lost
we were not free of.”
Gestalt. Metaview.
The last ditch
really spelling it out
for you – “She is gone” –
and that field caught
in an image
of lit leaves.
We freed up
those ludic texts
of hillscape, rising
into an ideal.
There is no way back
onto those hills.
Look from the same tump,
along the same alignment,
at midsummer
and you can see,
   quite clearly,
one word, repeated,
on every inch
of the placed ground:

   “Ha Ha
   Ha Ha
      Ha Ha
   Ha Ha.”

He said,

   “these places
      are taking
the piss
      out of us.”
Part One: In Outline
The Martyrs

They hang on crosses
like purple berries
full of our juice. We

are exhausted by martyrs
who smile like vampires
above our heads. “Come
down,” we say, “come down,”
but they do not hear,
“we need to eat you.”

“You have everything, you talk
madly with the gods,
all at our expense.”

They are ever smiling
at some lost point
on the horizon. Or are they

laughing at us, the ones
they have exploited,
lauded and betrayed?
Idealisation

The high moors swung above the sea
like a piece of landscape placed on stilts
or a scaffolding of light, half come adrift,
that had found its own salvation in the bees
whose tiny wings kept distance in the air
so long as all the heather was in place
(their silver wings, together, anchoring
a form of summer light found nowhere else).
And so it happened, matter was transformed
and landscape drifted high above the sea.
Sovereignty

On the map, an incomplete description. A site at the edge of an objective view of past events. Beyond our jurisdiction, some chalk digging. Too many theories tested here; and the emblem of Britain as Israel is raised where the Ark rests on pinions of air; the geometry marked by a thorn tree, an exposure to light. 
_Above the spectral farm, a spectral field._
A circle drawn on a block, as if etched into a square and the failed earthwork, suggesting; ‘an eternity’; an action chasing an outcome; a deferred completion (she _was_ already late); a monument, difficult to detect.
The Antiquarians

1 The Reconstructionists

They’d meet at intervals to explore
a narrative, a rumour, an ideology;
passing through an ancient system of symbols,
they climbed to the high field –
praying in the shadowed Roman ditch –
to map the tunnel entrances.
They talked of ancient graffiti, the image
of the horse, of Ireland crucified and –
in the rarefied, pre-dawn aura of success –
the buried armouries they’d find.
They’d keep place as place, cleansed of placelessness,
and make the low, post-English hills
a Hades of the placeless world, seeing
a newly fleshed-out view, shining,
that called for Eve, renewed by death,
to rise out of the grave again – her hair
shocked white by sin – her heart
so broken with remorse that she’d do anything
to be pitied and then killed again.
2 Heritage, Southampton

Someone was executed near the reservoir. That’s good. Near the A33.
A butler killed for stealing plate. His soul is trapped in water, slippery, like a pale organ, shot from the skin, dropped by butter fingers into place.
Meanwhile, in Lord’s Wood, archaeologists dig banks and ditches that did not exist before they came to make a cold, prosthetic history. Quaint, how they make the ground look old. The Cutted Thorn beside the road seems a place of ritual, ancient, instead of something just made up, a history that we’d believe.
3 Kore

I sang the field edge, bloody minded, lyrical – the nameless row of cottages along from the silos, the grain depot. I saw my father, my fracturing, in the distance with a gun, walking out of first light – a clear remembering – with a pheasant in his hand, for us. I found a schoolgirl in a ditch, fainting, a lost cross country runner to revive. Her earthen body had attracted me to the hedge, where she painted her lips with a rain-wet blackberry, strangely. She liked to see herself as innocent and, as a symbol, she overwhelmed the loss of place in me by grounding it in flesh; but then, as symbol, place was held by her until she too was locked inside a myth.
Form

It would seem black, from a distance, if it were not silvered in air; some forged artefact lifted on a wedge of light. A filtered upland, it held an idea – or seemed to – that altered as you looked at it; a chalice, like a cornucopia, all embossed; a glossary of antique signs; one concept aligned with another, becoming protean. The source of hope, you might say, responding to an image in the air, something inspired. My idea of an echo of a form. It filled me and it emptied me at once.
The Scouring

The graven image
on the hill is fading now.
A chalk cut image
“in outline only”

lost under hawthorn.

Nothing is known
of this figure. Seen
only when the light

is at an angle, it hides within
our consciousness;
a memory to share
called ‘blossom’.

A depression revealed.
An anchored light
or antique sign,
drawn into consciousness.

So I walked onto it,
as if to ditch
the outline of a self
from this tradition.