

Views of the Hudson

Also by Angela Gardner:

Poetry

Parts of Speech (2007)

twelve labours (2009)

The Night Ladder (2009)

ANGELA GARDNER

Views of the Hudson

— *A New York Book of Psalms* —

Shearsman Books
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2009 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-080-4
First edition

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Acknowledgements:

The author gratefully acknowledges the award of a Churchill Fellowship that enabled her to travel to New York during the writing of this poem. Thanks also to Laurie Duggan, Ian Friend and Kerry Kilner who took the time to read and comment on the manuscript during its development.

Some of the phrases in italics are freely quoted: in the valley of salt [8], God is our God [12 & 13], some days I dig a pit [15], the king of all the earth [25], . . . our houses will continue forever [34], the nights are long [41], sword raised over the head [43] are from The Psalms, King James version; neon in daylight [24] from 'A Step Away From Them' by Frank O'Hara; *scritti di storia dell'arte* [44] first publication of the Florentine technique of fresco conservation.

Nb: the poems are sonnets in that I count them as 14 lines,
i.e I count the gaps as lines also.

Cover: Digital image taken from panels four and five of the nine-panel monoprint *Vertical Coast* by Angela Gardner, 2006. First shown Redcliffe City Art Gallery, Queensland, and copyright © Angela Gardner, 2006.

For my parents

VIEWS OF THE HUDSON

1

the world turns from us
not from our feelings
(though everyone's heart leaks)

in the aeroplane
in pools of light
screens flutter mutely
but tell me nothing
not even that one small choice
they made

an announcement warns
take care
contents may shift during flight

the day I arrived—eye to the lens
the authority of the camera
which cannot lie. Unbelieving scanners
held like a hand of safety from the clouds
ungloved, lace cuffed, slim wrested
How could we ever doubt
their almost sequin encrusted weaponry?
(biometrically matched to our photographs
eyes open and clearly visible)
The reassembled image or thunder
authenticated as the voice from above
I imagine on the wall behind his head
three budgie wings in flying formation
... a world created by angels

3

under this sky here is perfection
A god that surrounds himself with
thieves adulterers advocates
godly and ungodly all demanding
I am here

And me? Why are these two lives
in place at once?

Why do they stand so far apart?

In the crowded terminal at JFK
I can hear the uncomfortable silence
in all this noise

1954 or 1967? it only makes a difference
in density. Passers-by avoid eye contact
or each other or themselves
Even reflections in glass provoke this
so why stand in their sway?
(an unlikely exhortation)
Blow through these streets
clothes as barely in contact with bodies
as our thoughts—after all day and night
screens blaze without us

Stop the car you tell me
:I have totally missed the point or will
violence is inevitable—not sleep

5

I stand in awe
the sheer volume of it sheer

or below have I misunderstood?
As if for blessing
there are broken filaments of dusk or dawn
a voice at day that leans over my shoulder:
more light to straighten the path
remove the cheats and night workers
drive flatterers' tongues back to their beds
in their mouths How to stay?
walk don't walk
it's not always a choice
or even so clear, come the light of day

... clear and daylit
and tipped into a promised land
of refrigerators, aircon, long wheelbase cars
A pile em high sell em cheap arcadia
hardly incremental of utopian amendments
This is what I dreamed of
Spanish American & Mexican food served
it was what we were looking for yes?
Our rightful inheritance of home ... of home
the lie of the land (flattened and regularised)

Even in the eye of the beholder
everything to hand and something
for others to envy

7

a little black dress
a box cut red jacket with overlong sleeves
a full length coat, a skirt
a purple shirt with a cuff full of buttons

that's my jacket
you keep your two eyes on it

two figures caught against a lighted wall
searching the fine tonality of skin

we struggle with nakedness
from cleavage to cunt

in the valley of salt

where I am high as a kite one minute
and lost the next. Turn to look again
he returns unravaged. Basquiat arms raised
above his tarnished gargantuan head
Gold-perfumed and irresistible
pins around his waist
so photorealistically human
(for so we envy and aspire)

With him at my side
there is a strange elasticity to reality
each object in heightened conversation
with emptiness