

at maimonides table

this book is dedicated
to the unborn dead

at maimonides table

by

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God writes straight with crooked lines
[Portuguese proverb]

And in my going out to meet you
I found you coming towards me
[Jehuda Halevi]

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[Hillel]
also used
to say: If
I am not
for myself,
who is for
me, But
if I am for
my own
self [only],
what am
I, And if
not now,
when?

[BT Aboth
1;14 (8)]

book one

in the fields of megiddo

And the king of Babylon smote them,
and put them to death at Riblah in the
land of Hamath. So Judah was carried
away captive out of his land.

[2 Kings 25:21]

I

imploded

warriors

stroma

as hillel the elder watched a skull

float upon the face of the water

sewers opened

flow of raw art

vessels cracked banks rats crawled ashore

implex of reason

sprung from *eagle of córdoba* s

stain enlightened sky

scourge of tongue broken star

gravelled words

refracted light

as

sacred scrolls

cradled mountains cities oceans

it were as if a dance

of two companies

cratered monochrome image over hebron

lugworm

leucoma

lenticular lesion

for sound lies in rhythms speech

last man orders from ship-soiled sailors arrived on shore

blood from the book
blood from the tongue

fent figments of flesh
erased their wounds
as daemon death dipped
reed-quivered fingers
into cold metallic alphabets

& gouged gods writ into
gift appointed universe

listen to the wandering ear
far greater than maimonides eye
for *shimon bar kokhbah*
has stepped out of jacob s covetous stall

man of destiny
anointed
your
glory
lies
beneath white wippen waters star-studied earth

as the angel of
history
skims deceitful brooks rivers that fail

II

broke this this spell this
conatus of desire
dissolved

brocard pretensions
of *brocatelle* dreams

this god of love
is
not
this
god of love

but another s love
like love
from love
over-flows

so
abide not in love
but be
in
love

not this love of singular reason

with its
multiplicities of shapes
figures
&
identities
of shadows

nor this love
trapped in ironic gaps of reason
with its cunning intellects of resplendent logic denied

&
become not an other self
wrapped in loves attributes
with her parables
sheathed
in orichalceous
mountains of gold

that other self
as pale as silver tried in a crucible seven times

like the self
that spins its webs through inextricable
distances of time
with love fashioned
from in-dwellings of love
abandoned
or
inflected through an interstitial
difference of sound
with its lustres of grace
trapped between the visible and indivisible
against the sheaf of a tongue
or
the pearl
of a tear

III

1

from beginning to beginnings
from before the beginning
god boiled beelzebub in fire

the god that squashed the fly
that basked in ineffable suns
the god that severed the heads
of seven dead rabbits
the gods from gods
old ghost company

gods ghoul-stricken strangled
cumulate clown

rats tails twitching
whenever death disturbed the narrow streets of luz

2

standing alone in the garden
dressed in an old grey-green coat
regimental tie / regulation cloak

remembered
how last admirable legion
late hyacinth
strewn against jacob s winter bloom

could not remember
laburnum
how leaves
tress of trees
sycamores turned into stone

forgot
they plucked violas from snow
whenever they scattered death in the larch
or planted misery
under cedars of lebanon

3

balsam oil for libation
sistrum charters
chalcidian soothsayers
scanners
cutters of heavens
& star-gazers

but regulus redoubled his endeavours
suckled blood

from the rod of their mouth
& the breath of their lips

sung accordion scented sounds
 catacoustics for the soul

children s screaming-&-wailing
their infant voices immured inside the city walls

what then shall i answer when i am reproved
egyptian / chaldean / syrian / babylonian / roman / german

 forged iron tongues
hammered from spikenard words
 bent on diasporas gravid anvils
 as measured in alphabets of ginger
 peeled from the floor

death-masques carved in invincible clay

this were the knowledge what tampered

4

impassioned
tear-drop melted her eye
when
she told me
of tigers
slaughtered
teeth of wild beasts
used against charms

 then inveigled me
 with derision
like a ladle
 turning gruel

that old semitic race
flavoured with money
stewed in corruptions of dreams

5

mice faroed
by cargo
& wheel

hand cut/ scourge
four-score
wound
jewel-scarred face
slit lip/
snarled grin

whipped mongrel / gypsy / serb / hebrew or jew

death-rattle
harrowed jacob s slattern star

split
the seven sacred numbers
soaked in rubicon red

6

labour of cottars
gramary
language of first fruit covered with fig
glazed ice /
cracklured-eye /
lear
lustres of gloze
grizzled seed-pod
trodden / sand sprinkled under foot

rent words wrenched from wars

severed limbs
 glistened
 songs drunken
 danced distance deliverance

let us sing his praise
 from our honeyed tongues
 migrating on iron wings
 sprung from manichean machines ruthless eloquence

does abraham still lie in the arms of sarah
 and you reciting those predicant prayers
 of incipient blessings
 stitched through salutary nets
 of salvation

listen to the five
 patriarchs buried
 under
 stone
 still sleeping

i have dreamed i have dreamed

from *al-andalus*
 to dreams not yet lived

almond birch thistle
 shevelled songs of the thrush

first that familial smell of the crowd
then that near distant scent of fear
carried on the hiss of hatred
that lies beyond the range of ordinary hearing
then
the chill wind / & crackling of walls
that heralds the howling and ruthless mob

mesmeric / penumbras
acrid smoke
burnt limbs / oiled
like greek acrobats
their flesh slued through mourning

croup & saw dust clung to the martyrs lungs

IV

1

the man in the grey-green overcoat
lent me an old newspaper umbrella
i still remember how it folded outwards

we studied
crude diagrams of northern constellations
their spectral motors linked us to earth

we
learnt
how the wings of a bat
quivered the green porcelain sky

eloquent theories
stuttered out of
old romantic tales

drift wood
/ lagan /
consonants
crushed on
slaggèd shore

2

all
through that night
sat near
by my father
remembered him
bridling tears
riding
palomino steeds of regret

brattling fear-bucking
stallions bronco-backed dreams

still craving
ambitions empty
sacks of greed

all
through that night
sat near
by my father
coveted
him
in coverts of pride

marot elohim /
(visions of god)
like
ezekiel
waiting for a kiss

in a corner
 of a room
 my father s dreams still fit in ruins

remnants of compassion s gentle touch
 first carried me
 then succoured me
 at arm s length
 suffered me derisions
 as he ground down my bones
 into dust

dis-infected
 soiled sheets cleft
 to that imprint of nothing
 to which
 i have grown accustomed

once upon a time i stepped into a dream
 that drew me inexplicably towards a circuitous
 passage leading inevitably to an impassable street
 near by an old wooden gate built into a wall
 surrounding a garden overgrown with a single
briar-rose draining the purling well of sound

dark semblance of my mother tongue
 curdled
 around
 familiar drone
 of threshing machines
 dampened
 patch /
 inter-leaved

V

those irascible gifts not given
love stolen from the fifteen souls
drowning in the narrow street
this was the singular not the particular
neither the one nor the fifty-nine

watchman what of the night

so
the seven sons of ishmael
carried their burden abroad

this was the wisdom of ice the light of fire
& the sound of the horn
still not heard in *jabneh*

each dawn
wakens another memory
just as that memory weakens its memory

but
if the morning cometh then so does the night

i will set me a lamp at my feet
& wait
in the absence of your glory
& sit
in the shadow
of your inalienable allegory
that indivisible other of the self

i will stand me upon my watch and set me upon the tower

here lies
the eternal stutterer of laws

the donary of imponderable dowers
the
squanderer
of irrefragable alms

let not your faith be cast on the rip of a dice
nor the glance of an eye measured in dendrons
of silence

then a voice
shone forth
& i saw it call

write the vision and make it plain upon tables
that a man may read it swiftly

but if the vision should tarry
wait for it for it will surely come

then god closed the abyss and sealed it with his name

yesterday his voice will be torn from the book
tomorrow his face was erased from the dead
 & soon this love poem
like
this love poem could not be read /
without reference to infinity

VI

1

bright
white word
woven
through the needle of an eye