

Drawing in Ash

ALSO BY WILL STONE

POETRY

Glaciation – Shearsman Books (2007; Shearsman Books edition 2015)

The Sleepwalkers – Shearsman Books (2016)

TRANSLATIONS

Les Chimères – Gérard de Nerval – Menard Press (1999)

To The Silenced – Selected Poems of Georg Trakl – Arc Publications (2005)

Journeys – Stefan Zweig – Hesperus Press (2010)

Rilke in Paris – Rainer Maria Rilke & Maurice Betz

(Hesperus Press (2013))

Nietzsche – Stefan Zweig – Hesperus Press (2013)

On the End of the World – Joseph Roth – Hesperus Press (2014)

Poems – Emile Verhaeren – Arc Publications (2014)

Poems – Georges Rodenbach – Arc Publications (2015)

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for Emma Mountcastle

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You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame: How could you become new if you had not first become ashes?

– Nietzsche

Guided Tour of the Ruins

Gather round, ladies and gentlemen,
and behold, for this was their city
their profound well, reflecting
a sad constellation of cheap tin stars.
Nourished on the hampers of decadence,
still they breathed in night's mint air
and under the elaborate tortures
of their own design, finally confessed...
Let us begin downtown, when,
on gala night, the hysterical movie star
was suddenly impaled
on a lance of white-hot realisation.
How she struggled to swab her wound
as the onyx limousine pulled away.
Let us remember, ladies and gentlemen,
the day when all finally awake
and fight to take cuttings
from madmen's brains.
Imagine, if you will, how worms feel
when finally the rotten apple gives.
Imagine the hardest winter,
imagine the longest scream
unable to fade, for that is how
this generation lived...

The Extinction Plan

Moments of pain, progress driven,
the unwelcome clarity of time's incision
enhanced by the new drug day,
where late crimes roll and bask
and suddenly woken eyes, lepers
peer in on hastening apocalypse.

The drone of no return, the settling
of old scores, of charcoal petals,
the cinder path of all that is predicted.
She who never arrived one step ahead
and all around you the embalmed
the catacombed, erect in their niches.

The extinction plan in motion,
as cut price flights steeply climb,
over Ensor's cornered skeleton.

In order to go on Schubert pens,
Munch paints *Death and the Maiden*.
Strindberg runs through the Latin Quarter
brandishing his hands, black and burned
from experiments with sulphur.

Each repeats what has gone before.
The earth can take another sack of fear,
a single life's strict toiling,
embittered aging, the dead weight of loss,
a case of cherished photographs
and a few last sprigs of joy.

No one wants to be dust.
No one wants their love left out,
but nearly every wheel finds the rail
and follows the tramline to lust.

In one dive billions of krill find God.
Ghostly, like a low gas flame
they go on a while unseen, they exist
to explain the blue whale's darkness.

Christ on the Cross – Delacroix

Tearing away from the nails
towards the blind to come,
the twisted rope coil of flesh
and all of his will, the pale flame
licks up to the murmur of the crowd.

The eyes are driven up towards
the backward gazing retinue of gods,
eyes where hot coals have rolled
down the incline from believers' doubts.

Raised to Golgotha's prowling nimbus,
kneeling in thickets, a cliff, grim and hopeless
the light on its way but too far behind,
delayed at a bend in the river
where the watching face of the town
stoops instinctively to drink.

Human labour – two wedges hammered down
no Mary, no mourners, no soldiers
only bare brown blood-soiled ground
and the rent sail of a loin cloth
dragged out behind, the bloody ensign,

Above the broad bow of ribs
head hard back, taut, stiffened
like a strapped-down lunatic.
The lips, berry-blackened, alerted
by the awakening siren of putrefaction.

Hands pinioned yet still travelling,
nailed to prove they can't perform,
yet still this moonlit weapon is carried down
the tributaries of mankind, primed,
and perfectly aimed, a harpoon still shining,
still standing in the sea-sluced wound
of death.

Nietzsche at the End

Yes, that's me in the armchair,
my face obediently lit by madness.
Dogs run with any bone I give up
and these silly old women fetch them back.
They lean in on me, fussing.
But I am still Dionysus
and with a terrifyingly thin hand
emerging from the blanket
I wave the world I gnawed white away.
What are my eyes now?
The shadow of moisture fading
too quickly from stone.
What is my heart?
A pebble in a black pool
on the side of the mountain
that never sees the sun.
Idiots!
And the stupidity that must come,
clockwork monkeys beating the skin drum
and my face seen again beneath the ice,
interrupting every thaw.