

SAMPLER

John Hall

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Poems

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Days

Meaning Insomnia

Malolactic Ferment

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Repressed Intimations

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Volume 1: On Performance Writing,
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Volume 2: Writing towards Writing and Reading:
On Poetics, with Implicated Readings

John Hall

As a said place

Poems

SAMPLER

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SAMPLER

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 still
quake & 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

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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

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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

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a disguised self
direction *do not*
owe your self the one
as it were accruing
capital hop
ing 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

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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

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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

the world is said
said Emmanuel Levinas

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world
touched
bodies

and all the bodies
saying

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 will ed 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

death is the no-response [*sans réponse*]

said Levinas

the living
cannot
not respond

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

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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

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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.