

*Ha Ha*

*Also by Andrew Jordan:*

St Catherine's Buried Chapel (Taxus, 1987)

The Mute Bride (Stride, 1998)

**A n d r e w J o r d a n**

**H a H a**

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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.