

John Hall

Other books by John Hall

Between the Cities

Days

Meaning Insomnia

Malolactic Ferment

Couch Grass

Repressed Intimations

Else Here: Selected Poems

Apricot Pages

John Hall

Couldn't you?
Poems for pages

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Contents

Couldn't you?	7
Gloss	11
Harder than ease	23
I on a	37
A lone knower's disavowals	38
Four topical poems	38
Here and there	41
Changing lines	49
At any time	65
An essay on lyric ethics	69
Between the fragments	75
A version of a list of giving	85
The last word	87
Notes and acknowledgements	89

Couldn't you?

In those golden days the talk was miniature and barred: understated, precise, golden and, when appropriate, just not stated at all. No voice was raised, even in silence. It was then I learnt how various omission and restraint can be and learnt to admire and envy – indeed try to emulate – articulate silence.

§

I could never get past the part in the story where they all left. A loss is not a loss unless it keeps happening. Perhaps there is a time when you are just about to lose the loss and you remember, poignantly. Like waking with a start just before you were asleep. The point is not when they left but repeating to yourself how it will be when they have gone. It will be all right won't it? No it won't. It is because you can't forget that it will happen again. Once is enough but there is no such thing as once. Once upon a time happens all the time and is impossible. It can't happen. The time which never was has gone and what repeats is not the time but the impossibility of its return except as a sense of its impossibility. What repeats is this avoidance of this story of loss. It has to repeat impossibly because it has no history. It is avoided so often it is fully there. Hung by the force of avoidance. And what hangs swings. At every moment returns to itself in order to leave for itself. It is not as though I could tell it once and for all. Though I could try. Couldn't you.

§

Despite a severance, solemnly to declare veracity and perseverance. Hit verity and back down from teeth on lips to front

palate. Suppress palatal terror. Palatial errors, with flowers and vowels free-ranging over the lawns. Parkland commandeered for the purposes of modern myth. Majestic common land. Tell me I'm not wrong. Travel between vowels and prefixes through the oscillations of cut-and-run, of truth on the move. She smiles shyly because that's the way she was stolen. An old trick. If you can't say it sing it. The young charmer. More than half in love with you singing. Repetition of white teeth chanting against red lips. Truth grows delirious. Heaven knows what the doctor got up to meanwhile. Trembling in the face: teeth and lips. Paid to cure. Caring about that. Lying because you care about cure. Of course truth bleeds loss and blossom on the lips. That's the smile that severs. Spit the tooth out to say it. Why not? Truly, you'll smile later through the gap.

§

There is repetition and there is avoidance. There is avoidance of repetition. The avoidance of repetition is repeated. You don't notice perhaps because your attention voids itself, veering on to the surface of particulars. On to the line of events. This is how you love and avoid love. There is no object larger than the imagined world. Its worn corners. Its weary shoulders. Love repeats on itself. This abstraction is a loop out of the real that holes out local meaning by senseless repetition. Say it often enough and it empties. If you empty it carefully enough what is left is a fine abstraction, a void or vacuum pulling back the gravity of particulars. As though a nothing could exert such force. I repeat myself. Of course I don't. It is suspended by a force of insistence. On being nothing.

§

there is repetition
I could never get past
there is repetition and there is
I could never get past the part
there is avoidance of repetition
I could never get past the part in the story
the void dance of repetition is repeated
the lost last part in the story where they all
I could never get past

Gloss (Lyrical Abstractions)

remorse

you did it
 it
bites back

mordant

it bites
 it
keeps biting

shame

you wish
you had
n't you
did it
shows no
way to
look a
way wound
is
 ever
ywhere

guilt

wrong enough
to pay

envy

your lack
in sight o
o ther's full
ness

diffidence

hang back
(hinge)
but hanker

envy

see

ing

in

s

our

love

lust

looking to

be where

you see

there you

are

you see

you

look to see

you

envy

bad sense
looking upon

affection

facts s'
often
looks di
late
lassi
tude of good
ness pull
s love near
haze
y and you
phoric

possession

no good
ness
when love close
s
in
on the lo
ok to
break
and enter

vanity

no wound in
beauty no
end
try in
tegrity of
end
ptiness full
face w'
out depth

vanity

from a shining
surface I take
my image in air
y body my being
as in air grounded I and
you it is you
rs I have
bought it
caved in
emptor

yearning

in the eye a
fleck no
less
than a store
y of
of loss leave
the fullness you
never had the
facts soft
end their sur
faces perm
e able