

Extracts from *Waterloo Samplers No. 1*, Simon Jenner

Apologia for Laureates

There's no language for disasters –
how can you flesh the O's scream
with lips you can ask nothing of.

Obscenity's immediate. Carnage hollows
vowels and asks for vacuum words –
whoever fills them is damned

fitting the fast-advertised memorial.
Like this one, tugging at how half-memorable
clenched fists fade from a screen of years.

How such verses quaint and crab themselves
to footnotes. But how centuries on
their heart cavities frame all there is;

like mould-injected plasters on Pompeii
struck and minted in their rough-clenched grief,
their cast infinite, just missing a human face.

Strad

Violins dipped in lime Cremona water
crystallised their varnish to pierce all walls
the city's strange depositories striate a singing tone –
potassium purpling centuries of wood passagework.

There's no classical Achilles' tendon strung.
These Catholic craftsmen were dyed to their wrists
and rendered their own calloused hands immortal.
Even when the pine-encalcined chemistries fade

and late Amati spins a longer decaying action
the slow burn sycamore that raised its maker's pitch –
like an appetite for parched song, to render Achilles
from voice to voice with all the crumbled parchment gone –

works its trace elemental homeopathy in a name.
That it needs just this pinch of iron incising
limewood, not stripping the centuries or cities
to keep the uninvented languages going.

Mr Jones's English

'I don't want to hurt you boy.' Husky, nasty, he stroked me
in the musty lumber room away from sneering class.
Mr Jones's self-love was wasted on us.
Rigid, I'd not even muster him a self-pity.

Sacked, he swooped off one of his old troop
to woods that left him in irons. A sadist.
Yet his calloused fingers hadn't wholly missed
their incidental gesture to leave the worsening group.

He smirked at me, yet his splinter of Auden stayed
till it pushed me to words I'd not yet prised.
Towards the locked room of what in him had died;
his pity, if not the pederast, repaid.

Godzilla vs. King Kong

Fay Wray's the monster.
Deraciné, Kong totters for the '30 Crash
the world screened to cutey queen screamers
girdling the earth's dark in a second's flush.

Godzilla, born of that other
holocaust, Japan learned to love
the bomb's uranium, his heart another
fission of blunderers, one remove

from hate. So soon he mutates
from horror to hero, by '55
radiates economical miracles, dates
his honoured turnaround with how to serve.

Mothra, Metgodzilla falter;
Kong's ambassadorial fate
marks declines, falls of a culture
that drops, spits out, won't assimilate.

Name

Names flare with the most volatile;
break across languages as horsed khans
fly fit for centuries or scorch back to the mercied
undergrowth of scholars' leaves
brushing my cheek; or out there, morse-coding
an out-dated tap-tap on this window's red October.
Names need opening to.

Ours say they'll not leave us. But they do,
to some bearer of all our variant labels –
first, surname, initials. They whisper: 'Give us
something unique of yourselves; then we'll hover
like flies on horseshit or bees in paradisal amber.
Have it your way, Adolf, Amadeus. We'll stay
breathing you out of this dust.'