

F I N A L I S T S



G E O F F R E Y H I L L

1: after Paul Éluard, 'Couvre-feu', 1942

So what big deal forbidden doors
so who came forth if no escape
so what's to say no-one got through
so what the cité interdit
that's how it goes the people starved
so there's a thing the ammo gone
so what what if the curfews toll
so there so there so there our love

2: after some lines of Pierre Jean Jouve, 'Gravitation', 1948

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That all are guilty though a shameful verdict

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monstrous as becoming lords of heaven

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mortality o'ertravailed in its dying

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that the Last Judgement knows not what it does

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3: after André Frénaud, 'Exhortation aux Pauvres', 1942

Inescapable as dearth this fury
inexpressible our words' attrition
nor yet inseparably single-minded:

there will be dawn it is not here assigned us
not now as earth grows gravid for the taking
something new laboured wails upon the silence:

salut! the killing wheel is hereby broken
signals abroad tomorrow shall atone us
streetlamps hate's gallows and the eyes for love

In preparing *Broken Hierarchies: Poems 1952–2012* (2013), the final edition of his collected poems, Geoffrey Hill made a number of additions and revisions to his previous books of poetry. Some of these additions he decided, in the end, not to publish. For instance, he once envisaged, but finally decided against, expanding the poem "The Oath" in *The Treatise of Civil Power* (2007) so that it would appear as the first in a sequence (collectively entitled "Finalists") to consist of four poems that adapted or responded to French works. The three additional poems he drafted for this purpose, all in response to French verse published in the 1940s, are printed here.

Hill's very free response to some lines from Jouve's "Gravitation" was itself an extensive revision to the free adaption of Jouve's poem which he had originally made for the first draft of "Finalists":

That all stand guilty though obscene the verdict
that love's an ordure of divine emission
hope's umbilicus a red-raw halter
that such monstrosities are lords of heaven
that God has masturbated his creation
that living's overlabored in its dying
that death withdraws its terminating labour –
nothing scry nothing –
that the Last Judgement knows not what it does

In the end, Hill dropped all these additions to *The Treatise of Civil Power* from *Broken Hierarchies*.

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