

jenin

'jenin' i declaim
it sounds hollow like something
from an old sonnet –
'jenin' i declaim
once again and feel that it
sounds a little bet
ter not quite so hys
terical although still a
bit too dry as if
the word suffered from
sclerosis or it had been
really supercooled

'jenin' i declaim
with a firm voice – and then it
sounds like an order
or a headword from
the encyclopedia
'jenin' i whisper
as if the word had
run like paraffin wax or
was coming from the
other side of the
grave or just was wholly in
comprehensible

'jenin' i declaim
for the fifth time as if it
was a question of
a password or a
word from a dead language and
there is nobody
who answers either
on the telephone or
in reality –
it would seem just as
if 'jenin' has been consigned
to oblivion

'jenin' i declaim
one last time competing with
the nightingale which
has a screw loose com
peting with the redcurrant
standing there aflame
in exodus com
peting with al-jazeera
competing with the
commission of in
quiry and death's nefari
ous panegyric

ramallah

a time and place for
everything work is one thing
play another – right?
isn't that what one
always says? – ramallah's one
thing and the poem's
another isn't
that how things must be kept a
part as they are kept
apart in law – art
kept separate and life (or
death) for its own sake?

i too have written
about the orange-flowered
hawkweed out at heart
land and praised the in
finite approximations
of the ego con
cerning itself or
the epileptic fits of
the holy spirit
and have remembered
to remember ramallah's
shattered headquarters

i too have written
about the light summer nights
and roses darker
than altar wine or
have celebrated my fath
er's centenary
and my beloved's
eyes (full of internation
al klein bleu) have re
membered to remem
ber ramallah which is a
blaze like a hawthorn

there is a time for
ramallah and a ramal
lah that's in time there
is a time to write
poems and a time for ra
mallah there is a
time to write about
ramallah and a time for
a ramallah in
poems there is a
time to write about a 'ra
mallah' in time

nablus

i am sorry that
i have to say it i am
sorry that i have
to write this poem
i am sorry that i have
to say 'nablus' (e
ven though it's a fine
proper name) because nablus
has already been
forgotten like a
chopped-off chicken's foot that points
the way to silence

i am obliged to
say it loud and clear: twenty
years from now nablus
will be forgotten –
its struggle and sacrifici
ces its resistance
the word will only
occur in tourist brochures
on glossy paper
whether the town is
part of an independent
palestine or not

i have never been
to nablus and will never
visit it either
that is why i look
the town up in the ency
clopedia: soap
production has played
a significant role in
the history of
the town as well as
would-be suicides i add
on my own account

words do not grow on
fingers – i know that perfect
ly well at my age
one should keep one's trap
shut – nevertheless i can
not resist the temp
tation: 'nablus' i
both say and write for the a
bove-mentioned reasons
and also because the
word is as beautiful as
an empty matchbox

jericho

'nipplewort' and 'hawk's
beard' i have registered to
day and entered in
to this herbari-
um – indisputably much
easier than try-
ing to place 'jeri-
cho' on this virtual map
or of placing 'al-
ariha' on the
occupied left bank in the
blue atlas of dreams

i position je-
richo with a make believe
drawing pin in the
imaginary
state i am in the process
of projecting and
of sketching on the
provisional white are-
as of the paper
two hundred and fif-
ty metres beneath the sur-
face of the poem

like some chartered sur-
veyor (the firm: mason and
dixon) i am par-
celling out land ten
kilometres south of the
dead sea: it is there
jericho lies that's
to say 'here' on the page of
this prospectus of
letters that can al-
so be joined to form the name
'tall-al-sultan'

then i breathe over
this imaginary pol-
ity (the promised
land) with breath that smells
of garlic and of cheap wine
but the words hold and
the letters do not
come tumbling down as they did
on the occasion
when joshua brought
down the walls of jericho
with sounding trumpets

tulkarm

a new line of poetry's in the process of
being established
not between maryland and pennsylvania
but in galilee
southwards from tulkarm
three hundred kilometres
of concrete passing
through all of the promised land or barbed wire all the
way round the full moon

is it by the way
alright with that word 'tulkarm'?
should i rather have
chosen some other
one 'addidas' for example or 'mossad' the
word is perhaps catchy a word that sounds like a
split eyebrow even though 'tulkarm' is really
the name of a town in a fictitious state

i readily admit i didn't know tulkarm
either as a town or a word before
two days ago but that is not the point but that
simple decency:
of introducing and respecting the name of
my collection's almost imaginary geographical map

tulkarm me here and tulkarm me there – everyone
has his own tulkarm full of paranoid
notions that are about this and that or occupation forces that
shoot indiscriminately among the houses
tulkarm me here and tulkarm me there – everyone
has his own tulkarm

bethlehem

but it's quite another matter with 'bethlehem'
just listen: 'bethlehem' i say – what do you (i) answer then – what association's on the tip of the tongue?
nativity play – or just straight: jesus – aren't i right although tank and crossfire would certainly be more appropriate

bethlehem – what a great brand name for a logo on a sweatshirt the name has become internationally recognised and rubber-stamped even though both tanks and bulldozers are driving among the ruins of the letters – it is politically correct to say 'bethlehem'

'bethlehem' despite everything is an integral part of christian identity and doesn't sound too arabic either 'bethlehem' is okay – even though daily house-to-house searches are undertaken behind all the new testament-like embassures of the vowels

bethlehem i (you) declaim grundtvig you (i) reply bethlehem you (i) declaim st. luke i (you) reply bethlehem (i-you) declaim christmas eve (you-i) reply bethlehem i declaim – israel you reply bethlehem you then declaim palestine is what i then reply

hebron

hebron: a blueprint
that's full of the secrets of
others (abraham
isaac and the grave
of joseph for example
or a mosque that is
marked with a cross strange
ly enough) like a déjà-
vu from the front pa
ges of the newspa
pers where the tanks are driving
among all the words

hebron: a word that
seems to close around itself
like forgotten dreams
or as if it en
compassed a transcendent sol
stice apart from the
settlement qiryat
arba's unfamiliar vowels
at its centre a
word that cannot be
neutralised with the aid of
anti-tank rockets

hebron: like being
part of a collective un
conscious and being
dressed in much too large
and anachronistic com
bat boots that crush the
word beneath their feet
or like wandering around
among all the let
ters in camouflage
equipment anaesthetised
by clouds of tear-gas

hebron: a word that
gives rise to memories no
one can remember
that leads to other
words than those we believed pos
sible so long af
ter: new words such as
'al-fatah' or pitch-black
words like 'intifa
da' created in
the poem at the moment
of decreation

gaza

what about gaza?
(and this is not the nurser
ymen's sales depart
ment in odense)
just what are we to do with
gaza? –it is a
very ancient name
(it's very likely hebrew)
and commands of course
our deepest respect
and this is why i mention
it in this e-mail

tuthmosis the third
alexander the great jean
baptiste kleber
and edmund allen
by all of them are words that
are connected to
gaza (as you can
see i have done my homework)
all almost archae
ological words
in a last mosaic po
em about gaza

what i really ought
to have said was or rather
is: that house arrest
curfews the sahti
and jabaliyya of the
refugee camps (as
you can see i have been
reading the daily press) so
as to get closer
to the truth than the
is possible via the
historical facts

and what about the
gaza strip? – it sounds more like
some new hair fash
ion or almost in
decent – what are we to do
with the gaza strip? –
what colour does it
have – is it a silvery
bronze and the word it
self to be consid
ered an innovation a
much uglier word)?

jerusalem

'jerusalem' – sings
kim borg (or was his name franz
or maybe even
frank?) 'jerusalem'
borg sings at any rate on
the air just like an
echo (from the o
pen windows of my childhood)
that do not reach me
until fifty years
later on a dreary rain
y day in summer

i grab hold of the
telephone and ring a com
pletely random per
son: jerusalem
i then say (as a boy i
asked the butcher whe
ther or not he'd a
pig's head) jerusalem – je
rusalem i keep
on saying even
though i can hear that i have
been disconnected

i press the number
two on the display and then
record the follow
ing welcome greeting:
'jerusalem' – then press three
and listen to the
new welcome greeting:
'jerusalem' i hear with
a voice that's just like
my own like two peas
in a pod – and lastly i
press the asterisk

jerusalem au
gust strindberg once wrote which
now has become a
film – completely wrong –
it was selma lagerlöf
who wrote jerusa
lem and strindberg to
damascus – okay no of
fence meant i've got the
message as you were
and so i refrain from writ
ing 'jerusalem'

rafah

rifah rufah ra
fah my thoughts go to rafah
town target for a
dollar lead into
the crowds of people rifah
rufah rafah the
plane goes to rafah
town bombs from a streaky cloud
rifah rufah ra
fah the army goes
to rafah town and recon
quers it yet again

rifah rufah ra
fah what's the price of rafah
two projectiles and
an armour-piercing
shell if you want it in tef
lon just go to sha
ron if you want it
to croak then just let it soak
rifah rufah ra
fah a ten thousand
tears for every onion rif
ah rufah rafah

rifah rufah ra
fah said the soldier buy the
grenade said the ser
geant how many do
you want? replied the corpo
ral a hundred thou
sand replied the cap
tain isn't that enough rep
lied the colonel and
a million billion
replied the general ri
fah rufah rafah

rifah rufah ra
fah caterpillars and clus
ter bombs and the bar
rel of a rifle
the man who drops bombs on peo
le has a disgust
ing habit would you
like to be our twinned town if
so we would like to
be the same rifah
rufah rafah town we would
like to be the same

klaus hœck