

GHT Creative Histories

Voice of the battery

Barked orders,
wheel-rims clattering on flagstones
as guns are rolled to keyhole ports,
doors clunk shut.

Tower looks out to sea
Tower is protector
Tower does not negotiate
Tower is a soldier

Men laugh, swear, complain and sweat -
from the garderobe,
strained grunts and satisfied sighs;
in the stores, "God's nails!" yelled
as a finger is crushed while stacking shot.

Tower is prepared.
Tower listens quietly.
Tower has its back to the town.
Tower waits in its solidity.

The tide laps. In the distance,
carts rattle, elm on cobbles,
vendors yell above the hubbub
that sails a seaward breeze.

Tower hears.

Voice of a ruin

I am weak and gunless -
where enemies could not breach my walls,
now children crawl and lime crumbles,
stones fall away like lepers' teeth
and I am plundered by the townsfolk
I swore to guard. Gulls *keee*
over fishguts on the wharf,
their rich shit drizzling
between my wet-rot timbers,
past birds' nests and swarming woodlice
while lichen slowly scabs me.
Squatting bent-backed
like an old and bitter veteran
in stained and ragged livery,
I am gum-black,
begging bowl and tavern-rat,
and I mutter my revenge.

Breme's pride

I raise my glass
by the square foot,
make walls lyke unto heav'n,
turn merchants' kitchens into palaces
for a fee. I carve the chalk-moulds,
pour, plane away the flash
and, tallowing the flux,
place withies in their heart.
By hot iron
I score and cut, then groze
to fit the lead. Fine work
brings me beds and kettles,
a covered salt-pot,
three pairs of hose,
a cloak and wainscots -
for a steady hand my thanks to God,
to the plenty of my craft,
praise be,
I raise my glass.