

# 18 The Pamphlet Choice

A B Jackson  
*Apocrypha*

## Selectors' Comment

Apocrypha can be defined as early Christian writings which are considered 'of questionable authenticity', and this makes a suitably uncertain ground for the flights of fancy in A B Jackson's new poetic sequence. *Apocrypha* offers the reader a series of re-wired parables and transplanted morality tales. You never quite know where you are: one moment you'll be dealing with Judas and Lazarus, the next you're back in 21st Century Scotland, enjoying "tea so strong / you could trot a mouse on it". Gradually, you realise that these two worlds are one and the same: they have been crushed together by Jackson's compacted, glittering language.

*Apocrypha* is prefaced by quotations from Wallace Stevens and George W. Bush, two linguistic pioneers whose presences are subtly felt throughout, and the landscape of the poems is littered with the detritus of American culture and politics: "the risen Elvis / rolls away his rhinestone" and the end of days is played out to the twanging of a Gretsch guitar.

What emerges above all is Jackson's love of language and his ability to switch from slapstick ("Love breezed in / like Jesus Christ in a kiss-me-quick hat") to something altogether more sinister: "Moses, in a marmalade wig, reloaded his gun". Kiss-me-quick hats off to Donut Press, who have done Jackson proud with

this beautifully produced pamphlet.

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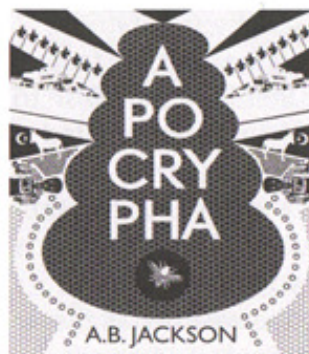
Moses horned, lantern-jawed,  
down from his mountain.  
The Law weighed half a ton,

his palms and fingertips  
rosy-raw, the neighbours agog.  
Chinese whispers followed, via

fat lip or speech impediment:  
avoid shellfish and homosexuals;  
dally not with incontinent vipers

on Hollywood Boulevard; cherish  
cuckoo spit, the cuckoo wasp.  
Secure the election.

Moses, in a marmalade wig,  
reloaded his gun.



*Apocrypha* is  
published by  
Donut Press, priced  
at £10.00