

## Voices 900 by William Hershaw

### **Pairt Ane**

First Voice: Aince I lived a life...  
Second Voice: Wheesht nou, hush! Ye'll wauk the toun!  
First Voice: Aince I lived a life afore...  
Third Voice: Wheesht and hear the silence fa!  
First Voice: Aince I bade amang the licht...  
Fourth Voice: Let the Living dream their lives!  
First Voice: Memories deave ma hert like gall...  
All: *Obey and thank thy God for all.*

### **Pairt Twa**

The Voice O The Abbey Stanes:

I am monie voices,  
a babble thirled ti a stane,  
I am monie and I am ane,  
o ilka second and daein.  
Stane ower stane ower stane ower stane,  
biggit trig and strang  
and yet nae mair nor molecules,  
bubbles o stour and air,  
void and radiation, strectched oot in time,  
like fine Dunfermline linen on a washing line.  
Whit infinities lig atween these wa's!  
I am a sponge stane that vampire like  
sooks up lives and energies.  
Gin this cauld stane had a hert  
it wad loo ti gan intil the licht,  
insteid it dreams and kens -  
*Obey and thank thy God for all.*

### **Pairt Thrie**

First Voice: Hear me!  
Second Voice: Hear me anaw!  
All: Haud still! Hear me!  
Ma tale is worth the hearin...

Robert

Henrysoun: Tongues o nae substance,  
fu o dirl and dirdum, rattle  
like the metal clappers  
o the shilpit Uppers' bells.

Pedant: Hear me oot, I say!  
Let me tell o but ae day,  
ae minute o it aw,  
the smaest thing that ere I saw,  
the squeakin o a moose as I gaed past...

Monk: Blethers!  
I'll tell ye o the leavin o ma life,  
the lousin o the cord,  
the mirk deith road atween twa lichts...

Girl: Havers!  
The leavin o it?  
I lay injizzen for twal hours,  
yer deith road was nae mair nor a lang lie  
ti the ugsome pains I tholed...

Old Man: Show respect for age!  
Auld and blin was I,  
the siller buried weel below the stairs.  
Oh murder! Murder! Help, I caw!  
Though they brak this bluidit heid I willnae  
speik...

Boy: Hear him? He lived ti echty-fower,  
hear me, wha fell wi fever, plague  
and no yet fowerteen years auld,  
why? No fair!  
When ithers got faur mair...

Girl: Men are like bairns,  
haud greetan and hear how aince I was blyth,  
nimble and lithe, wi neat fingers, ettlin ti  
knead  
and spin or stroke a laddie's gowden pow...  
laid low in love  
ti dee in sharn and pain,  
sair reaved, sair reaved!

All: Listen!  
Listen!  
Listen ti me!

Carnegie: ...maist conscience-wracked o aw, hear me,  
born and weel-kent in this auld grey toun,  
wee Aund Carnegie, wi nae erse ti his breeks,  
wha left for the steel toun hells,  
wha cam hame happit wi gowd  
and gied it awa maist prodigal-like.  
I made masel: libraries, education, books.  
I got things duin. Ithers did weel aff me

like the fish and shells that live aff the back  
o the muckle whale. Why dae they hate me?  
Why dae they mak a gowk o a muckle darg?

Miner:

O ye did weel, Carnegie, I ken your kind  
awricht.  
You were the parasite that fed aff your ain  
immigrant clan.  
Ye'll no ken me, a miner, killed in  
Valleyfield.  
Yer hypocrisy and lees are ill ti thole.  
Ye tell the workin man ti educate hisel,  
tell him he can be free o the furnace hell,  
syne clap him in jile when he sterts up a  
Union!  
Deed me tae, like you noo - though anither  
canker  
burns me like wersh ghaist coals below the  
Forth.  
Whit guid aw yer siller noo?  
Joe wad back me up gin he were here -  
Whaur's Joe?  
whaur are they aw? This ane pit oot in a car  
crash,  
anither, a dockyaird accident.  
Whaur's Bruce, thon bluid drouthy leper?  
Politician, general, terrorist, king.  
Whit's left o noble Bruce?  
The hert that daured the Saracen is dust,  
his banes gleam white below the Abbey flags.  
He tholes this eternity in stane  
while the slottry drap o the reid Comyn's bluid  
measures oot a measureless sentence.  
In the name o Margaret, God forgie oor sins!

Henrysoun:

Let unquiet voices cease,  
grant peace,  
while we bide oor term on earth.  
We maun mind o him that was hingit on a tree,  
wha was born intil a stall,  
*Obey and thank thy God for all.*

**Pairt Fower**

Malcolm:

Be still,  
be still  
and bide at peace.  
Unfinished business means nocht, nae mair.  
The years hae faulded ower these waes and  
wars,

these griefs and pains.  
Ilka tale is telit ower again,  
a hunder, a thoosand times.  
Coontless minutes hae buried these sadnesses.  
We arenae wha we think we are...  
thochts are empty, voices tongueless,  
memories in stane, echoes and shadows o  
naethin.  
Speir for the starn o the dawin,  
wait on the radiant licht ti cam.  
Let us howp oor better pairts hae left this airt  
and time  
for thon saving licht.  
We shall, we shall, we shall  
*Obey and thank oor God for all.*

Margaret:

Silence gaes afore and efter,  
gies meanin ti ilk soond.  
Darkness ligs atween twa lights,  
though ain is juist a condle on the wain.  
Aw voices are wheeshed at last.  
*Obey and thank thy God for all...*