PICTURE OFA NATIVITY

GEOFFREY HILL



Sea-preserved, heaped with sea-spoils, Ribs, keels, coral sores, Detached faces, ephemeral oils, Discharged on the world's outer shores,

A dumb child-king
Arrives at his right place; rests,
Undisturbed, among slack serpents; beasts
With claws flesh-buttered. In the gathering

Of bestial and common hardship
Artistic men appear to worship
And fall down; to recognize
Familiar tokens; believe their own eyes.

Above the marvel, each rigid head, Angels, their unnatural wings displayed, Freeze into an attitude Recalling the dead.



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