

## Hattusas

*Daniel A. Harris*

Appraise the shrewd King's Gate at Hattusas:\*  
 There you'll find no tourist buses fouling  
 the Aegean air as crowds make marvel  
 at the stepped roof of Agamemnon's tomb  
 where, inch by jutted inch, the layered slabs  
 hesitate to point the angle.

Instead:

up the terrace from the shards of pithoi  
 once filled with grains or oils of sacrifice,  
 amid the rubble berms (the city's walls  
 that yoke the outcrop salients Hatti chose  
 for civic fastness) this titanic gate:  
 Two skyward parabolic jambs lean stone  
 to stone at the convex peak, like foreheads  
 joined in huddle, hard embrace.

Tusks, stone ribs:

no chinks for notes, as at the Wailing Wall.  
 Just their pressed weight makes the vast air between  
 a space where any laden caravan  
 from Trebizond could amble through with myrrh  
 for the temple of Judea, or old  
 men saunter talking of the dead they knew  
 and never fear the limestone spears might slip  
 to dash their leisure.

## Sheer calibration

placed these stones to need no girding socket,  
as if the arch, foreknowing, pierced bedrock  
to make complete—shrug off the bas-reliefs  
of Hittite armies and their tasseled gods—  
the perfect egg of lost geometries.

\* The ancient Hittite urban capital near Boguskale (or Bogaskoy), northeast of Ankara, Turkey, fl. 1650-1200 BCE. Hatti (line 10) ruled towards the end of the Hittite period; earlier, Hattusas was a chief center of Assyrian merchant culture.



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