

# Painted, spoken

*edited by Richard Price*

number 22

**Painted, spoken** is edited, typeset, and published by Richard Price. Please send an A5 stamped self-addressed envelope for a free copy (two first class stamps please).

**Painted, spoken**'s editorial policy is constituted in instalments by the contents of **Painted, spoken**

Earlier issues are available digitally at [www.hydrohotel.net/mags](http://www.hydrohotel.net/mags)

**Painted, spoken** appears occasionally, from 24 Sirdar Rd, Wood Green, London N22 6RG

Other related projects are outlined at [www.hydrohotel.net](http://www.hydrohotel.net)

# Painted, spoken

*edited by Richard Price*

***Painted, spoken*** number 22 2011

*Chris McCabe*  
**YOU'RE MEAT BOOK**

You're meat, book –  
letterpress beef,  
fillet of serifs,  
linocut sausage  
of prime conceits.

You're meat, book –  
shadowwing of protein,  
broadside plucked  
of glyphs, shoulder  
of raw mezzotints.

You're meat, book –  
dictionary of diced  
cuts, miscellany  
of snouts & claws.  
Folio lardons.

You're meat, book –  
giblet cuneiform,  
hog's pud of arial  
and linotype. Pop-up  
of cold slice & offal.

You're meat, book –  
thin sliced page-  
mark. Lolling errata-  
slip barcoded  
with ink-fat.

You're meat, book –  
beefheart pocket-  
guide. Appendix  
of jerky. Crackling  
slipcase.

You're meat, book.  
Placenta semiotics,  
umbical acknowledge-  
ments, gonad cyclo-  
pedia.

You're meat, book –  
veal verso  
rectal recto  
caul copertina of  
gizzard's syntax.

You're meat, book –  
words measured  
in ounces. Off-the-  
bone polemic. Epic  
canape.

You're meat book.  
Book, you're steak.

*from* **The Restructure**

THE RESTRUCTURE employs luminescent workmen  
to rewire the leisure-cables

to divert live bones into the A-road  
to prepare the basket for the dogging session

with a basset hound strapped  
in the passenger seat –

*I've heard Barbara's leaving, Janice  
will probably get her job, then THE RESTRUCTURE*

*will sort-out what's left for us, but did you see  
the double-lobes of debris explode*

*over the paperclips, and then to flatter  
I heard THE RESTRUCTURE cream-up*

*the PA saying her tight body  
could have been made from starstuff*

*before throwing-up in its Sunday-best  
of hunt-red & black bowler*

*tequila-starters hurled in pools  
sloshed around galoshes*

*before wiping itself down to strut  
its stuff in fresh gladrags*

*I couldn't believe what I saw.*  
THE RESTRUCTURE is like a locum doctor

prescribing passwords such as *furry mushroom &*  
*canary pancake*  
substantiating all available fields

such as *Look For* : Recognition, which trawls  
the inbox archive like the system's software has the  
bends

and could be mistaken for a screw  
except all its keys are bent out-of-usage

*– Are we still allowed a teabreak*  
*I always had one before, it's the time I take my pills –*

THE RESTRUCTURE talks of *repossessing your*  
*attention*  
as if to make clear that it owned your thoughts before

counts each multiple sneeze in its sleep  
to replace wet dreams

wakes with the agenda prepared  
for any disconnect in communication

*– We do sort of sympathise with the stress*  
*and you know, kind of want to help –*

but whatever today's  
agreement with THE RESTRUCTURE is,  
is tomorrow's obsolete eject

*Dorothy Lawrenson*

**September**

This far north, the harvest happens late.  
Rooks go clattering over the sycamores  
whose shadows yawn after them, down to the river.  
Uncut wheat staggers under its own weight.

Summer is leaving too, exchanging its gold  
for brass and copper. It is not so strange  
to feel nostalgia for the present; already  
this September evening is as old

as a photograph of itself. The light, the shadows  
on the field, are sepia, as if this were  
some other evening in September, some other  
harvest that went ungathered years ago.



## **At Crinan**

How can one put a lock on the sea?  
Like putting a lock on love. I'd always assumed  
a flood and ebb to these things,  
the influence of the moon.

We watched the lock-keeper  
at Crinan cheating the tide:  
exhausting, filling, exhausting the chamber  
as if working an artificial heart.

It was sunset, and the last boat  
sat in the sea-lock till the gates opened.  
Then we saw her wake a final time, as she drifted  
out at last with the pull of the ocean.

Gerry Loose  
from **fault line**

**XIV**

the boat is written  
in the leaf

*commentary:*

digging for pignuts  
don't kill things  
what hope the limping  
fox in snow  
brightness

**LXXIX**

the players  
begin wakening  
stretch to  
immediate caffetieres  
toast & mobiles  
text mntns  
meaning not mountains  
not BeinnChaorach  
gathering frost  
but munitions

*commentary:*

the hand that targets  
the army  
will be cut off  
the Leader says  
the tree  
a spruce  
points the first limb  
across the fence

## LXXXI

lately made of flesh & blood  
in Operation Herrick  
the Major tells us  
how remarkably  
this irrigation system  
so closely resembles  
that of the valley  
of the river **H**  
& straw & manure  
& here's a number of the  
**A** diaspora too

### *commentary:*

what's the dance we are left with  
after hours whisky  
what's the song bequeathed  
a red rose  
then he says  
salmon in a tin  
venison on butcher slab  
what's the ground we're left with  
bracken & ragwort  
nightshade

## **Neo-Benshi at PolyPly: James Davies, Drew Milne, Dell Olsen and Sophie Mayer**

*Reviewed by Richard Price*

I knew of James Davies from his much-missed little magazine or serial work *Matchbox* (which was, in fact, a matchbox) but hadn't seen him read before. His first piece, "Acronyms", projected the eponymous abbreviated forms onto a screen while the poet read out what was usually another form of acronym or, in some cases, a phrase. The written text seemed largely independent of the spoken text, either as if a greater code was at play – a reminder of the shibbolethic qualities of acronyms – or as if sense could in fact not be made of the overall structure, a reminder that acronyms are attempts at organising various kinds of chaos.

Davies's second piece, "Kate Bush", was figurative. Two cartoonised faces, "Charles" and "Audrey" appeared on the screen; each portrait was represented by a gendered voice corresponding to the apparent gender of the portrait. I only found out later that the voices of Charles and Audrey are in fact owned by a very large telecoms corporation, a slightly unsettling funnelling of a synthetic yet human voice as owned intermediary. Davies had explained that he had created a source text for what his characters said, rather than the flarf approach of using found texts usually from the internet. Personally speaking, that approach interests me – the use of *creating* 'found texts' – it suggests that there is an organising principle in the 'found' that does not come from the 'found' 'as such' (I like making my 'own' corpii, too, for later permutational mischief).

Like all of what was presented at PolyPly it was all too rich to make any comment much more than a thin pathway through or around this piece, but I liked the interchange of voices here – the voices sounded treated, auto-tuned or Stephen Hawking'd, but in English machine English rather than US machine English, and some of the phrases were arresting and funny – "I like to get told off at work, once in a while."

Davies's third piece, "Budgie", seemed less cooked to me, the phrases very loose, even though Davies suggested he'd been working on it the longest. The screen was an abstract green, perhaps something under a microscope, and I think I wanted similar attention to the language.

The work by the next performer, Drew Milne, entailed the poet's voicing over source films from the 50s or 60s: one a documentary on the Skylon from the Festival of Britain and another one on high rise buildings in (I think) Bristol. He rightly reminded the audience of the concealed film crews necessary

for these films but I was uneasy when he described the patronisation explicit in the films as 'violence' – I wanted more to be said about that: if that is 'violence' what is, well, violence?

Another surprise to me was the appearance of a Fender guitar and a fuzzbox – Milne's guitarwork sounded marvellous to me as he played and voiced-over simultaneously to these two still fascinating films. That said, I remember interviewing occupants of high rises in Sighthill Edinburgh when I was training to be a journalist and the residents didn't feel the angst that was perhaps deep down in the gothic fuzz of Milne's guitar. The admittedly few people I interviewed really liked their homes, or said they did. So again I go back to that word "violence" and how it can be applied – or am I confusing voiceover with voiceunder? Nevertheless, problematising is surely part of the point of what PolyPly (and Drew) is doing and I like that.

Dell Olsen's piece was the highlight for me. The source film was a documentary on industrial lacemaking in Nottingham, I think from the 1920s or 30s (a silent film). I immediately thought of Frances Presley's wonderful book *Automatic Cross Stitch*, another investigative gender-re-sensitised lyrical book about work. There is also an earlier brilliant example of neo-Benshi by David Kinloch, "Dancing in the Archive", in which two men 'dance' around the molten steel they are taking from a factory furnace. I need hardly say that there is a complex elegiac relationship in all these new works to an archiving past – where who is archiving is important to know – which particularly emphasised communal behaviour working within starkly dictated parameters not always emanating from 'the community' itself. You can see the text in his collection *In My Father's House*, published some years ago, but of course the point about Neo-Benshi is the live performance; I saw David performing this piece in London in front of the archive film in 2005; a quite brilliant event if I say so myself (I organised it).

At PolyPly Olsen used the text placards of the silent film to make a percussive sound with the keyboard – like hitting bells or large-scale triangle really hard – somehow pretty and somehow industrial (equals lace!). The voice-over here included wildflowers, presumably accepted patterns of lace, with the phrase "spots and sprigs" taking on more and more of the rhythmic burden, like a propelling refrain. As the piece went on, the screen began to propagate itself, becoming, like lace, a repeated pattern, smaller and smaller, more and more multiple. Delivery was rough at the edges sometimes – sometimes there was too much spoken text for the inscribed interval and it bled over into another section – but that made

me think of the glorious precision & simplifying intensity of the industrial process (it is probably wrong to like the miniaturising postcards of Mondrian just as much as the frail originals but if so I plead very guilty).

Sophie Mayer's film had been specially made by a contemporary film-maker friend and was in one way 'simply' about being abroad. This was a rather muted end to a very stimulating evening and I think maybe the programme might have been better with three rather than four performers, or shorter sets from each – there is a real danger of sensory and cerebral dulling after a certain point. Mayer's text had an affinity with the language difficulties foregrounded in Jo Shapcott's *Phrase Book* (a book I very much like) but perhaps with less edge or fun. The fault is probably mine - I was still in 'poetry-reading mode' and this evening was about re-adjusting to a song/ libretto / voice-over approach, where voice-text is only one element and so may be working, not inattentively but rather with a different kind of attention. Audience members, too, may have to develop different kinds of responsiveness to integrate all that is going on, if, indeed a totalising goal of integration is really how one experiences any live event, or should. I like the fact of this opportunity to think so many things at once.

## **First Word, Last Word**

*Francesca Lisette, Giles Goodland, Jeff Hilson, Richard Price, Simon Smith, Vahni Capildeo*

### **First Word**

*Tentmaker Mix*

If love is a many-gendered thing, (Aaa, doming deust)  
Noli me tangere for nancy's I am.  
(She's over me...  
Cello).

I just write what the hell I want.  
You've lied through your teeth and it's not a pretty sight.

The copious oceans breathe out their inanimate subjects  
and divide.

Baalistic, intercontinent hittile: repeat I am not a  
crossbowman.

Piano over cello –

Q: Where are you going?

It was again transparent waves with cruel undertow.

Stop at a cartoon for simple accidents could have meant  
cabalage, cruciferal kohlrabi.

When I grow up I want to be I thomas wyatt, days,  
out of doors.

From the Greek — *Eros is Chaos*, Fusion, meaning:  
burns behind eyelids.

Combing the days into discreet breeds of wanting,  
Dadad, deadead decessor.

I lov'd to you o anne Boleyn, Lavender concentrate  
of days:

lovers are trophies to one another.

This is the place where you come to a stone.

To use this dark & silence,  
out of which no solid mass can,  
eagleness, eyrial talont.

When I was sir thomas wyatt, she... she she... was me?  
Concentrate, Bach, concentrate. (Thrives, the sum of  
kisses kissed on kisses kissed.)

Brain

why demand?

World is it; spaced in actions, afternoon use for nails  
Fablebody, mothical figure.

Who I love is Donovan, Kaleidoscope.

The life of *Sabotage* has entered my poem-field /  
Life.

The river murmurs.



## **Last Word**

*Vested Interest Mix*

lives in the cells of each unresisted meeting (?), afflautist,  
mausical berather.

Si j'étais un cranequinier.

Bach thrives: I want to write un-hip poems so badly I'd  
copy Rilke

and turn my phone to 'silent'.

Always flying off. Nothing to write home about,  
torn & wept the skeletal vision there.

Beholed, worndown shredsheets & quite the way you do  
taped, (thrives). A: Lavatory,  
and I shocked speechless: for there we were,  
not having been saved.

As the radio plays white on black, Caralarmer,  
malarming encalment,  
was there room in the room that you room'd in?  
Beginning from the Greek — *Eros is Chaos* —  
having a passion that says teal,  
— savour fleecing the syllables' rift.

Daylung, breathless sealight,  
these hands make the best english bats.  
Eyes, Lovers, are trophies to one another.  
Stone made aghast its feather-mouth opens on shade:  
all refurbishment of joys surpassed, and sceptres  
rape the sky.

Earshell, egglistening pearlobe (she loves to wear  
a lame bra too)

S/he

Alive /

We'll throw them in the air to lose the knowledge,  
your earthing by name.

Farmarchine, compine halvaster.

O anne boleyne it's not the fucking 1360s. Don't think:  
absorb.

Into Paradise, what is this thing I learn to do?

*Peter McCarey*  
**From The Syllabary**  
www.thesyllabary.com

24.9.18     **Intrigue**

A league  
Is never enough.

23.9.20

No weel? We'll no  
Be keeping you. Fare ye weel!  
No weelfare. Commonweal  
's got too oxymoronic.  
You have to hive the wealth off for flotation.  
No, the commons willnae sink.  
The seas'll rise.

23.9.19

He never said  
"Blessed are the weak".

23.x.17

We're weeer than we were. The wars and woers  
Are water under the bridge, over the weir  
Carded white. Neglected silver wire-  
Drawn days and nights exchange  
Their costumes: a werewolf, awareness.

23.9.13

And when she's out of work  
She weeps for weeks.

23.10.13

Wipes – a pack in her handbag  
Where the walkman used to be  
That got pulled by the earphones  
Off the top shelf.

23.11.13

Wowfs it down and disappears  
With never a backward glance.

24.13.11     **From a Louse**

Great poet o the puddin race!  
Get that grin aff your pin-up face.  
To harbour me is no disgrace  
For any lady:  
It's rare to pioneer a place  
No ploughed already!

"Tae see oursels as others see us"?  
That's common sense. That's the police –  
Hauf blin (take that fae one wi feelers  
In the back o's heid).  
Crazed banes! I hear your thin blood wheeze  
You'll soon be deid.

24.10.13

Lice had eyes, once.  
Now their day's like  
Air in the lights  
Of mad cows.

24.10.12

She lies with one,  
Lies to the other.  
Handles lives  
Like lines of verse, not to lyse  
The grammar  
Or the grace. Granted,  
We should shun  
The occasion of song.

Who limes the branches?

24.11.12

Lowes in the Book.  
Allows a lousy  
Fivepenny fuck.  
More Caesar than Jesus.

23.x.12     **Was**

Wows the weans  
And woos the parents,  
Woozy the clown  
Was a wise owl  
Now takes counsel only  
From the weasel in his Ys.

**23.1.6A Pyrenean Tale**

In the warp of the wind  
In the web of the snow  
There was a mountain dog of softest woof...

## **First Four Hours: A Diary of Occupy London**

### **R. J. Ford**

I left early, took the Underground to Holborn.

In case of kettling, I had an early lunch in a café near Chancery Lane. There was a *Big Issue* seller out of the window as I munched my mackerel sandwich.

I talked to him afterwards as I bought a copy, my first in years. Normally, he said, he has a spot near the Royal Courts of Justice down at Aldwych during the week. Lawyers stop but also lots of people with financial problems whose debts have turned critical. They're attending court for that reason. The full weight of the law falls on individuals in debt.

He had a northern accent I can't place because, although I've lived in London for almost half my life now, English accents still confuse me; but Scottish accents, do, too! Here, on the weekend – he works Saturday and Sunday – he'd found this spot which he likes. I was puzzled by that. After all, the City and its immediate outskirts are pretty dead in the weekend, but he said there was a hotel nearby - £400 a night – with people staying for long weekends there. He said they were largely from the North but didn't labour the personal significance.

If he got nine or so *Big Issues* sold a day he was happy. But the magazine's cover this week had not been a good seller – it seemed to be a pastiche of a romantic novel, the feature article being a history of Mills and Boon. People had been more interested in the previous one, which had Ewan Macgregor on the cover. It wasn't just about celebrity, that issue had been talking about spirituality, Buddhism etc, and though he wasn't religious (he was C of E he explained) he said people these days are really interested in those topics.

I wished him good luck with it all.

I popped into a stationer's to buy a notebook and pen, four or five times the price of a *Big Issue* I thought, grimly, and walked out towards St. Paul's.

The City is quiet. The financial service traders hold true to a five day week, though appear to demand a 24hr seven-days-a-week service from everyone else. It reminds me of all the 'red tape', the regulation and 'bureaucracy' they despise and lobby expensively to reduce. Yet, if you have ever seen the many pages of forms that the unemployed and / or disabled have to fill in for the pennies they are made to feel grateful to receive (and I have), you know who really has the burden of form-filling weighing heavily upon them.

I get a little lost and end up in front of what looks like an office-retail-unaffordable-housing block – “Old Bailey House.”

But I know I’m on the right track as police come into view.

There are parked police vans and here and there police constables walk around in twos. I think of children instructed to always to stay with their partner on an outing: if they get lost they can keep each other’s spirits up.

It’s clear Paternoster Square is the intended centre of today’s activities as the police stand in lines at each entrance, allowing no-one entry.

It’s a funny location to target – I’ve passed through it many times. The corporate art is anodyne but, with the benefit of the doubt, charming. I like the sculpture of sheep being led by a shepherd: it’s lifesize, a simple reminder of other trading in the square’s history, but of course a romanticisation which by accident or design humanises an amoral space where decisions can and do have extremely brutal consequences. This is the home of Goldman Sachs and the London Stock Exchange.

In keeping with that gentle anaesthetisation this is, overall, an unremarkable little piazza with café chains and industrialised (global) boutiques. Whenever a sector of a town is redeveloped it ends up looking like this – I like the clean looks, the café social space where there is talking out on the paving, but no-one would think it is anything more than generic. It doesn’t even have the neo-classical arrogance of the Bank of England building, elsewhere in the City. Perhaps that insidious aesthetic is part of the point. There is something about banks and the system of ownership which wants to construct the commonplace, to make their business seem so harmless; almost attractive, even. The same game is played with bank holidays. They function like a gift to the nation, but are really a *fait accompli*: we’re shutting our doors, Mr Banker tells us, take it or leave it but if I were you I’d try to make the best of it – think of it as another one of our great services to humankind.

There’s only a small gathering when I arrive at St Paul’s steps about a quarter to twelve noon; perhaps a couple of hundred.

I had been struck by the sight of a line of satellite vans back round the corner and I am again wide-eyed at the number of individuals now filming. At the moment the camera men and women seem to outnumber the protesters, a function of the extra space each needs around them to safely avoid those without their clobber, though some of the camerafolk *are* protesters, of course. Later I’ll see a police cameraman

recording it all, he thinks, and, as I hear a helicopter noise, I'll look up and see one of those pods on the corner of a building, those protective pods which conceal a CCTV camera. Above that, yes, there's the police helicopter with its film equipment no doubt. It's all about the *footage*.

I'm early and over-coffee'd so I yomp over the wonky bridge to the Tate and make use of the facilities. I can feel the glorious inner tension in my legs, the first time in a long time. It normally *is* a military operation, a 'yomp' indeed, this sort of perambulation if I have my daughter or my partner with me, as both are wheelchair users. At the Tate the able-bodied keep wheelchair users out of the lifts – art is apparently an urgent dog-eat-dog business – and always seem to be coming out of the disabled loos after we've been waiting hours for them. So I feel free, and a little guilty to be free.

Back at the steps of St Paul's there are more folk now. Quite a few Spaniards. As I later find out, Spain is one of the key countries for this wave of protest, predating America [by months] – though the poor, tardy reporting of the US 'occupations' has been bad enough. [Of course, growing up on the West of Scotland, the phrase 'US occupation' has a different connotation – of the US military garrisoned on the bases]. It's great to hear the Spaniards chanting together and though there aren't many of them – a few groups of six or so each – their voices carry and the crowd has great affection for them.

Most here are twenty-somethings, certainly some students and some ex-students, but there are forty- and fifty-somethings, too and one or two veterans, like the woman – in her sixties? – who gives a speech about the camp at RAF Waddington.

The first speaker had explained that he'd been away for about a year, away from protesting, because of a bipolar complex – but to see us all here today would bring anyone out of a depression. I thought that was a nice way of handling a personal crisis without making it too me me me, something all who took the stand must surely have to struggle with (imagine, "I just wrote this five page political poem for this occasion which I think it's important for all to hear...").

Peter Tatchell spoke, the day's first 'celebrity' but I couldn't help, in that mean-spirited way I have, feeling rather grateful that the demonstration to his right had intensified during his speech, drawing us away from the Cathedral steps and to a confrontation with the police guarding the hollow Paternoster Square. We moved off and Mr Tatchell lectured to the pigeons.



Mas preparados, mas informados, mas indignatos.

The demonstration moved to the [narrow, arched] south entrance to Paternoster Square, protected by four or five mounted policemen. A month or so ago my younger daughter, who was riding horses before she was three years old, said to me that the mounted police would be one place she'd certainly like to work. She is eleven and the horse mania shows no sign of abating. I made some remark about policing not really being about the horses and we changed the subject.

These horses are huge. If a demonstrator rode in on such a creature it would be both impressive and dangerous (not least to fellow protesters), but somehow mounted police are tolerated. Poor. Old. Vast. Horse.

The chant I liked best was "Our Streets! Our Streets!"

This seems to me to go to the heart of the issue: ownership within the polity. [There is nothing like the strength of sharing a chant among hundreds, perhaps thousands, of fellow protesters; the energy of the shared; amplified, strong, poetry.] There was something just silly about the police, in extravagant number behind the thin blue frontline, trying to stop the protesters sitting down in one particular place – Paternoster Square – when the protesters could do so anywhere else. In the end, that's what they did – occupying the piazza in front of St Paul's entrance.

The result was that there were two concentric rings of police (mostly but not wholly men) – one guarding an empty shopping mall, which also houses financial traders during the week, and one, the wider, stopping any more protesters coming into the space around St Paul's [and stopping demonstrators getting out]. The larger circle, a mixture of City police in their red-check-hat-bands, police vans and Metropolitan police – seemed to be trying to keep us captive – it was quite clearly to us a 'kettle', though later I heard that the police spokespeople laughably denied it – but, hours later, when I wanted to leave I simply asked a City policeman on the line how to get out and he let me through. I exited through a side-street, through two lines of policemen and twenty or so demonstrators who had been stopped from joining us.

The chant I liked least was "Get those animals off those horses!" The animals they mean are the police of course.

My history with the police has not been a happy one, though I'm glad only minor incidents have been the problem.

My first close experience was as a passenger in a car involved in a potentially serious accident. Both cars were written off, though very luckily no-one was badly physically hurt. When the police arrived and interviewed me as a witness I was still dazed. – I said, to be honest, I'm confused about what happened. "Well the court won't fucking want to hear that, son, will they?" the constable said to me.

The second time I saw a policeman close up I was at the scene of a car accident again. This time the officer was trying to force the hard tube of a breathalyser into the mouth of the driver, whose car was in bits – among pieces of the stone wall it had failed to persuade to give way. The driver was clearly drunk but his face was also as evidently a mash of bleeding flesh, teeth pointing out through his lips. An ambulance arrived and the paramedic persuaded the officer to put his instrument away.

The last time I was close to a police officer she was investigating my family for kidnapping our own child. A visitor to the house had heard my severely disabled Katie (it's a chromosomal thing), in a back room, making screeches and moans which were perfectly characteristic to us but which must have seemed disturbed out of context. These vocalisations can mean anything to I'd like another muffin or I am sick of documentaries on art, which I admit can be a form of torture if overdone.

The fact that they had glimpsed Katie in her orthopaedic chair, which looks at a glance as if you're locked down, hadn't helped: wooden, it's a cross between a high chair and a piece of gym equipment. The uniformed police officers duly raided the house - they called it a 'visit' - though, to their credit, their uncommon common sense, they had immediately seen the truth of the situation and backed off apologetically.

It wasn't the fact that they took the complaint seriously – though they could have asked a few questions on the phone first, or tried a softer approach, but Ok so they did what they did, and I'm glad there are people who do take the welfare of strangers seriously. But when I phoned to ask about just why they had to do what they did in that way they were so confused they gave me the key contact information of their informer!

I didn't use that information – as I say, I don't think it was a malicious enquiry (I have heard of families whose neighbours have invented stories and deliberately called the police to harass the learning disabled, but I don't think this was like that) – but what if I had been a hothead who wanted to exact my own petty justice, carried out my own kind of 'visit'?

All these examples are about the police misjudging public safety in the larger sense, about missing the importance of the human above the distractions of the petty legal, and misunderstanding how frightening the police are, *especially* to those who should have nothing to fear from them. To say the innocent have nothing to fear from the police is sick nonsense. There's a teenager with police-inflicted brain damage from the recent student protests; there is a series of unexplained and unpunished deaths in police custody; there is the promotion of the police officer who had responsibility for an innocent man's summary execution on the underground; there are clear instances of collusion between the police and the media, both acting above the law; and there is the casual and escalating police use of cattle-prods (re-branded as Star Trek 'Tasers'). It isn't a 'police state' (let's not get hysterical), but no reasonable innocent person should feel safe in the company of the police.

So, the police are already dehumanised. They need to become people again. That's the reason that I particularly dislike this chant – "Get those animals off those horses." The police are *not* pigs, are not 'animals'. If the protest movement is about *re*humanising everyone then that must aspirationally include the police; else it falls.

And don't forget that those shouting those chants – and unlike other phrases it was a good sign there was less enthusiasm among the crowd for them – would essentially be the bullying police in another political order. I do take issue with the way that violence is bandied about so casually among self-defined 'political poets' as if 'it's only metaphor.' Like our masters those acts of protest exercise a political and poetic power which is misdirected, potent but misdirected, a tactical error certainly, but a failure of a bigger imagination.

We stayed for maybe 20 minutes in front of the first entrance, the south, to Paternoster Square. To be honest at that point – about 12.30, in front of St Paul's, there weren't that many of us – [you could count it in the low hundreds] – but the walkways round the Square funnelled us and made us seem more numerous. [You couldn't move easily as an individual].

In a window on the fourth or fifth floor of one of the Paternoster Square buildings a man's face looked out at us.

Am not sure if we're moved on or if we make the move ourselves – there is no central command that can be seen at my point in the midst of the crowd – but, thwarted by the mounted police at the south entrance, we move round the buildings to the east.

[Conscious of all the filming again, the large hand-held cameras move with us, you have to be careful not to bump into people; and the policeman, grey-blue baseball cap on, filming us. I flashback to the videos the police made of protestors trying to protect the homes and trees in Leytonstone in the 1990s as the authorities carved a motorway link road through a part of the city with the lowest car ownership per head in the land. This time there are cameras trained on the police.]

No horses this time, though after a few minutes I overhear two friends discussing the fact, they believe, that there are police dogs. They refer to the police who left the dogs in the back of a car one day and so suffocated them by accident. One of the friends is afraid of dogs and sees this as an escalation of intent to harm us. I never do see any police dogs this day.

Quite a lot of time – twenty minutes? in front of this entrance and no-one knows what to do. [No clear leaders; that isn't the structure of this protest.] We just stand. Chatter among all the micro-groups of friends, lovers, representatives of groups.

A woman in her early twenties asks me why I've come to the demonstration. She has a fluffy microphone. Who are you I say. She gives me her name and says she's working for Radio Five Live. I pause – too much for radio – and talk about us all needing to rethink just exactly what ownership means – who and how. (To my surprise when I get back later in the day, this has not been quoted in every news bulletin worldwide...)

There are flurries of Spanish chanting / singing.

Whistling – piercing whistling Notting Hill Carnival style – rouses everyone's energy and there are more banners at the front, and speeches. Drums, too. One tall Scotsman talks directly to the police barring our way. His tone is sympathetic, asking them to examine their consciences, decide exactly what they think they are protecting.

Two of the constables are comically short – I didn't realise police could be so small. Brave, I think.

Still a sense of not knowing what to do. I move to the back, having found myself too near the front for my comfort.

I move to the back, having found myself too near the front for my comfort. I bump into two friends, Rob and E., originally from the Basque Country (lived in London a long time). I had no idea they'd be here. They tell me they've been following the events since the Spanish protests; today, occasionally they bump into Spaniards, have a friendly word or two. We talk

briefly about the record Rob and I have been making as two of the band in the latest phase of the Mirabeau project. There's guitar needed I think on a barren stretch on one of the recent tracks we've been working on, Age of Exploration, and it'd be brilliant if Rob could come up with something.

There's a commotion ahead of us – perhaps an arrest and a bundling into a police van. We can't see properly. Seems unlikely or unnecessary; the demonstration is not running at a high temperature.

Calm again.

We move back to St. Paul's and the general assembly there. Folk are trying to work out how to be effective with the human microphone. This is a system, in the absence or inadequacy of electric amplification, in which everyone around the person who is making a speech repeats what they have just said – usually in pieces of each sentence. Then those who have heard it repeat it to those who were too far away to hear, and so on. It means the whole assembly briefly 'owns' the words as they are repeated to each succeeding circle of the crowd.

It isn't working very well – the sentences are too long to remember properly and the initial speakers need to slow down. Near us a US woman is explaining how it works, from her experience in New York. [Should I say 'US'? Should I say 'woman'? Only 'No' if those ideas are no longer valid, the conditions in and around them?]

Fox News incident. Two protesters pretend to be Fox News cameraperson and reporter. Blue flak jacket, microphone with FOX NEWS collar. They dance across the sit down protesters (perhaps most of us are sitting down now, though I stand with my friends at the edge). At one point some of the protesters think the crew are real and boo in an aggressive way (not pantomime boos, these). Another protester gets up and seems to escort them to safety?

[Many discussions but I'm struck by the failure to address a key pattern in the crisis. In the print and broadcast media, in government, in the banks and financial services, in 'successful' writing (poets, novelists, screenwriters and the creative industries in general) and in the senior officer class in the police, there are two single common factors: the great preponderance of Oxford and Cambridge educated managers, executives and senior operatives, and the male bias. I imagine the three-way correlation between the misogyny inherent in the system, the elite educational pattern, and the catastrophic failure of the economics, is significant.

Perhaps the black and white photo of George Osborne in tucker at Oxford's Bullingdon club ("We're all in this together!") is just one cartoon too many: a picture, even though it is brandished satirically, which, despite itself, seems somehow to seal further scrutiny off from a wider more searching debate. No-one here seems to see the troughist way-of-education as a *structural* problem, though they might admit the lack of proper representation is unfair – which they then imagine 'solving' by letting x more 'underprivileged' kids into the racket. I'm surprised that no-one here is 'occupying' this area of establishment rhetoric (against the real 'failing schools' for example) by suggesting that these elite universities are the ones that should be put on special measures, closed if need be, like their tax-break private feeder schools, the islanding nurseries of the self-special and their toxic seepage of me me me. The media and the government are very keen on placing poor education at the heart of the UK's ills, but might it be more likely that it is the community-breaking mis-education practiced by and through the elite educational establishments that is the stronger poison, a structural malignancy at the heart of this crisis?]

We seem to be kettled – police have blocked off all exits. [I don't understand how this is not kidnapping, hostage-taking (ransom: stop discussing ideas in public); I feel restricted, claustrophobic, but my friends are there and I am able to appear relaxed.]

Yo Sushi, M&S, and Strada are kettled in with us! Starbucks, too.

[Merchandising idea: a little badge with a kettle on it – old-fashioned or sleek modern, doesn't matter – and simple legend, I was Kettled 2011." Badge of pride.]

A silver people carrier passing down the street is caught in the kettle by accident. Red buses. A driver and his friend get out of the silver car and suddenly another man strides past. They start shouting at the man. It's a language I can't understand at all but I hear those from the car shouting "fascisti! fascisti!" The man moves swiftly away, now arguing with them as he does so. He goes behind some police vans and I don't see him again.

I ask one of the remaining men what that was all about. He was a fascist he says, Iranian Revolutionary Guard. This man's brother – he gestures to his companion – was murdered by them. You're Iranian, too, I say. Yes, we had to leave.

They get back in the people carrier. In time they're allowed out of the keral.

Julian Assange has broken through into the crowd. Assembly asks if he should be allowed to speak. Votes mostly yes.

As he had arrived, much cheering, which I found strange for someone I thought was facing very serious sexual assault allegations. Odd that he appeared [whether or not guilty, where is the respect to the gravity of these allegations?].

He speaks well, has mastered the human microphone: this movement is not here to destroy law, he says, but to construct law.

Like all other speakers, celebrity or not, he is only given two or three minutes.

Later I leave [just before four in the afternoon]. I just ask one of the policemen how I can get out and he moves to one side and lets me walk free. You would never have known you could do that and perhaps you can't – I was just lucky.

A striking element of the day: the discursive circles within the broad circle of the general assembly. Given the police geometry of constriction through the thin blue 'garotte' this other model of the circular was more organic, flowers in timelapse with each petal in 'listening' correspondence with each petal in the bloom.

The Spanish innovation of raising flickering hands to signal yes also gave the day an element of the gentle, though of course the assertion of the body (*presence*) is neither gentle nor aggressive, it is.

There were perhaps two or three thousand people during the day. Some dissatisfaction among some of the protesters that more hadn't come but an 'occupation' after all is not the same as a march. The police surrounded the site and stopped further protesters coming on site – perhaps a few hundred more would have joined immediately but over the day maybe that have been nearer the thousand. There were no health and safety issues – there was plenty of space for more.

So, jammed between the London Stock Exchange and St Paul's Cathedral. I took my younger daughter up to the Cathedral once to see the Church of England's HQ in the City. But you had to pay to get in. A lot. This did nothing to lessen a nine-year-old's dim view of how religion operates in England, but as a (rather detached) attendee at a Catholic primary school nothing seems to surprise her about the Establishment's

religion or, since I think she really is detached, about the spirituality business in general. Faith corporates is a good phrase for these religions.[But I'm reading my views into her undeclared thoughts. In any case I'll wait a little later to explain the way the Church's corruption of its own aims extends to vast investments in the City and guaranteed seats in the House of Lords – it's so fantastical I might not be believed].

I left in part to get back to my partner, confined to the house on most days by severe disability. Her mother would be leaving shortly and so a bit of my company after a particularly hard couple of days healthwise wouldn't go amiss. In Strategy I think the concept of what you could do if you weren't doing what you had to do is called 'opportunity costs'.

The demographic at the protest is 20 something then 40 something plus, probably because the activity structure for young families, typically thirty something in these class bands (I'd estimate lower middle class and upper working class), would take them away from protests like this, and the service and consumable lock-on (the blackmail by government and capital) is centred on children and younger families, one of the reasons why there is so much 'moral' focus on them; there is so much product and service investment aimed at their faces. Creating a protesting space more inclusive of children and families, and the disabled, would be worthwhile for numbers and for message.

But I was also bored. I need to develop more patience if I'm ever to become an activist of this kind. A fantasy, probably. Despite the name, activism is about slowness, about patience. It's an endurance trial of one kind or another, and it reminds me in a way of the poetry scene. If you're wrongheaded you expect sparkle, movement, energy all the time but there is so much boredom in poetry – the texts, the performances (including mine, I should say) – and, even when it is not poorly achieved, so much slowness in its effect on others, in its artistic being – that you have to develop a different kind of expectation and interest in its world. Friendships are the gold, friendships which comfort but challenge, create with you little overlapping histories. And the number of activists – sharing the attendance, wave on wave – I guess there is strength in numbers not just as a mass but as a circuit of energy, renewing in relay? Another circle.

Walked out across the Millennium bridge and past the Tate again. I can walk! Thousands of people on the path taking in the golden autumn afternoon. I bet Tate was packed with people admiring the art of so many political activists – political



in the sense of changing society's thinking apparatus (or some of society). They could have finished looking at their Malevich or Kandinsky, Picasso or Braque, and made common cause with the 'occupation' but this afternoon, in a reverse of the old taxi-driver's joke, art lovers don't do north of the river.

But this again is the one, the one, the one attitude, the zealot's expectation on everyone to do their will Now, a shrill little mind that judges there and then for eternity.

Slow motion is very important as an idea.

*15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 [with later reflections in brackets]*

## **It's A Record: "Don't tell me this weightlessness training has all been for nothing."**

**Vostok 5:** music and art about people and animals in space, has this CD manifestation on Strelka Records. Contributors include **Tigercats, Darren Hayman, Fever Dream, Hexicon and [Robert] Rotifer**. Although Darren Hayman is clearly one of the rocket engines behind the project it is actually a wide-ranging showcase of accomplishment and different styles (rock, electronic, horn-sweeteners) which nevertheless, somehow, make this loose concept album cohere. Fever Dream's Joy Division-ish mournfulness captures the key tone, found here also in Rotifer's sympathy for the isolated-by-attention astronauts living in 'Star City' and Hayman's affecting songs of dogs in space (you might joke, but a dog is a life – I was amazed to learn by the way, when I attended one of the gigs accompanying the project – that quite a few dogs did actually make it back to Earth alive, if presumably traumatised).

**Darren Hayman's** album *Essex Arms* devoted to the much maligned county doesn't exactly encourage relocation. As with his re-creation of Harlow in the previous album *Pram Town*, he is still *exploring* the unfashionable places not simply repeating prejudices. It's at times a dark record, an album perhaps even of cruelty sometimes (I don't mean that Hayman is cruel himself but that he understands it lyrically) and yet he also wittily rescues cosiness – Winter Makes You Want Me More. With a nod to the old song 'Got a Light?' he manages in Super Kings to describe a rescue from a sleepwalking squalor that might have been rough and ready nostalgia itself. All this with his usual observational acuity ("The Scrabble words spell out ENNUI"), bottled in very sing-able songs and on several tracks a kind of delicate luminosity of playing, a cherishing halo-ing instinct that is almost always there even at Hayman's most melancholy. What a remarkable man he is. ||| With *Beer in the Breakers*, the new **Wave Pictures** record it's difficult to know which to like best: the detail of Dave Tattersall refracted narratives or his terrific guitar playing – at times dancing with high life brightness, at other times stabs somehow of hurt remorseful honey. See, even my metaphors melt! The title song, in which an abandoned holiday hide-away is discovered on a remote beach has a longing for the kind of happiness which the last track, Epping Forest (that county again), acknowledges and eulogises, knowing the weight of the fact of a relationship's absolute loss, a letter that never was going to get written was it?: "You know I figured I'd write it again at some easier time."

## **An Information: *Every Time It's Two For Joy***

There are so many funny asides in **Jeff Hilson's** *In the Assarts* (Veer) – “touch me not in dark places Attenborough”, “Getting out of our tree / it's like the radio in East Anglia” - that the asides become a kind of reverse-wear core to a book full of extraordinary glances. What are the glances looking at? -- a forest of Arden in a way, a fictionalised late medieval estate which is also English history and the history of English literature, 'grubbed up' from the denser thickets of the demesne to make a remarkable sequence of modern parsonnets. There is an awful lot of swearing in it – maybe too much? And yet a likeness might be Twain mutated to an English version of Huckleberry Finn delivering naive, which is to say very wise, commentary on modern and once modern poetry (and on the modern and the once modern). It is a comic book but it is not a minor one. The connections and variations across the whole piece, and the slyly aberrant syntax, make this a sustained work, a book that I happen to think is one of the classics of our poetry times. ||| **Simon Smith** has been busy: with **David Herd** *Rote/Thru* [Uncut], published by Zone (School of English, Rutherford College, U of Kent), a shared lyric sheet for their collaborative work with **Jack Hues** and The-Quartet, which they perform together. Two new pamphlets *The Mayakovsky Ode* and *First Odes First* (both Verisimilitude) show that the listening fluency of his work, which appears to have been released in a dramatic change of direction in *Reverdy Road* and *Mercury*, then continued in a new more varied way, separate piece by separate piece, in *London Bridge*, has returned in larger overall structures again. Quick reference points are Jack Spicer, Reverdy, Apollinaire – the out-and-about modernists – but Smith is now, now, and again now. There are very few writing today with this distinctive – startled, appalled, cherishing - lyrical power. ||| **James McGonigal** *Beyond the Last Dragon: A Life of Edwin Morgan* (Sandstone Press) charts the life of this remarkable poet and manages to be almost as alive to the rich range of Morgan's life and work as the poet was alive to the range of living itself. McGonigal is particularly strong on placing Morgan within the company of a 1960s avant-garde which Scotland could only sparsely provide (for whatever reason) and which England (for whatever reason...) could more richly. Morgan's translation skills - his openness to European influences, not just American ones - his out-going curiosity rather than self-observation, his formal mastery, and his poetry's explicit but not simplistically rendered social concerns (and his sociable playfulness) are key

characteristics which severally and together make him highly unusual even in the wider British context: he was a giant in Scottish literature and I hope this book, written by a poet who knew him well, will help bring the wider Anglophone recognition his work perhaps never quite received when he was alive. Speaking personally, I knew Eddie fairly well, too: we corresponded every few weeks for over twenty years and he was a friend who helped me through all the major crises I've had in my life (I'm not prone to them, but I've had my fair share); he expanded my reading and my horizons. Every time I see our sister, the moon, which is most nights, I think of him fondly: I still miss him. ||| One recent book which openly acknowledges Morgan's influence is **Simon Barraclough's** *Neptune Blue* (Salt), a witty, playful and sometimes rueful collection. The comparison with Morgan can be made, but readers of micro-reviews like this should know that this is mere shorthand for a poetry that has its own distinctiveness. The new collection offers a rich poetry: of planets as people, of household hearts – of liberated dogs, of, as it were, a sleuthing bloodhound who detects "the scars and trinkets of our trials, / the circuits, cogs and souvenirs of dance, / millenia of courtship in our glance." Barraclough is a delicately melancholy observer of the human condition. Considerable attention to the sequencing of the book as a whole, with the planets and hearts becoming stepping stones across the book. As another telling Barracloughian (and Morganian) creature, a magpie, remarks: "When I see a magpie / I count myself too / and every time it's 'Two for joy.'" Yes, there is a subtle kind of joy in this book. ||| **Matthew Caley's** *Apparently* (Bloodaxe) uses "apparently" as the first-word launch-pad for most of the poems here: the whole book is a jet-pack journey through and across various pieces of cultural clutter from the last hundred years or so. Longer. Image after brilliant image proceed: this is a book which is surprising, funny, and entertaining. If there are slight snags (for me) they are in the arch tone – cues which the story-teller uses to show he is holding these elaborate stories at armslength, almost hanging them up to dry, with faux distaste for their saturated contents (as indeed the gossip trope demands). This is a compliment to Caley's handling of content through a particular sustained tone. The word "apparently" is after all meant to do that personalised armslength trick – to give licence, to move into the grey area of enjoying what is held up at the same time to be morally suspect ("scandalous!" as my daughter used to say in a relished stage whisper, making scare-quotes with her fingers as if even the performed act of delicious moral outrage should now be up for some later always deferred judgement, and all the more delicious for

that). But for me, rather like the more elaborate distancing which operates in certain mainstream styles from the mid 1990s -- in the end, so sappingly -- there's an archness to it which creeps in, maybe creeps up from the material itself. This is now very common in contemporary poetry – it's not as crude as a nod and a wink, but perhaps it is a building of an imagined consensus of world weariness. I think – which is probably to think too much – this is a seeking for a poetic register which, ironically, given the casual vehicle, is attempting a kind of quiet authority by displaying not knowledge but knowingness. ||| **Rebecca Cremin's** *Lay'd* (Veer) follows 'lay' from song to bed to lie, as in 'deliberately not true'. It is a beautiful conceptual work, a series of connected sequences which flourishes in that clearly still fertile space between poetry and artist's book. ||| **Jim Carruth's** *Working the Hill* (Mariscat) continues Carruth's remarkable poetry of Renfrewshire farming, skilled, clear-eyed and touching testimony. **Chris Goode's** *Better than Language* (Ganzfield) is the first anthology in a very long time that I at least am aware of which has a productively *narrow* aesthetic focus – isn't about the single poem as a unit, isn't a large gathering of disparate poets. Rather this a grouping where late modernism and a performance and sometimes graphic art sensibility have mingled: sadly, they still resist calling themselves group formally but you can't have everything. **Sarah Kelly, Jonny Liron, Francesca Lisette, Joe Luna, Nat Raha, Linus Slug, Josh Stanley, Timothy Thornton, Anna Ticehurst, Jonty Tiplady, Mike Wallace-Hadrill, Tomas Weber and Steve Willey** are the featured poets. *Painted, spoken* salutes the twenty year retrospective *Collected Contraptions* by **Peter McCarey** and the lyrical meditation on art *Finger of a Frenchman* by **David Kinloch**. I am too close to these works and their authors to do anything but admit my bias, ask you to ignore it, and recommend them as books of the year, as indeed one national newspaper has already done.

*James Mc Laughlin*  
**Lung**

an equipoise  
a dexterity of oblivion

between  
lavender and lemon

imagines

another similar  
surplus

I'd like to  
feel more and more

continuously

## Contributors

**R. J. Ford** works in the synthetics industry. **Dorothy Lawrenson** is an artist and graphic designer based in Edinburgh. **Gerry Loose** lives on a boat hard by the Highland Fault line, close to Faslane's RN Nuclear Submarine base. He has published several collections of poetry, including *Printed on Water; New & Selected Poems* and most recently *that person himself* (all Shearsman), a book-length poem. **Peter McCarey** is the author of the study *MacDiarmid and the Russians* and many poetry collections, including *Collected Contraptions* (Carcenet). He lives in Geneva. **Chris McCabe's** books are *The Hutton Inquiry*, *Zeppelins* and, forthcoming, *THE RESTRUCTURE* (all Salt). **Francesca Lisette, Giles Goodland, Jeff Hilson, Richard Price, Simon Smith, and Vahni Capildeo** performed variations of "First Word, Last Word" at the Whitechapel Artist's Book Fair 2011 as guests of the Leeds University's Wild Pansy Press. **James Mc Laughlin**, is from Dumbarton. His publications include *Aeido* (Knives Forks and Spoons Press) and *Slip* (The Red Ceilings Press).

# Painted, spoken

Vahni Capildeo  
R J Ford  
Giles Goodland  
Jeff Hilson  
Dorothy Lawrenson  
Francesca Lisette  
Gerry Loose  
Chris McCabe  
Peter McCarey  
James McLaughlin  
Simon Smith

**Almost Free** (just send an A5 stamped addressed envelope - two first class stamps will cover the postage)