

# Painted, spoken

*edited by Richard Price*

number 23

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## **Contributors**

**James Aitchison** was born in Stirlingshire in 1938 and educated at Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities. He has published five collections of poetry and the critical study *The Golden Harvester: the vision of Edwin Muir*. **Simon Barraclough's** collections include the Forward shortlisted *Los Alamos Mon Amor* and *Neptune Blue*. **Chris Beckett** is a Curator at the British Library. Recent poetry in *Black Market Review* and *Cordite Poetry Review*. Recent essays on M J Tambimuttu, Bob Cobbing and J G Ballard in the *Electronic British Library Journal*. **Katy Evans-Bush's** poetry collections are *Me and the Dead* (2008) and *Egg Printing Explained* (2011), from Salt, and the pamphlet *Oscar & Henry* (2010, Rack Press). She is a freelance writer and poetry tutor, and writes the blog *Baroque in Hackney*. 'Analogue' was commissioned as part of an art installation called 'Infinite Playback', in which a turntable plays an LP recorded with the sound of its own making. The poem was read aloud to the LP at the private view of SWITCH/OVER at Wimbledon Space, 18 April 2012.

**Antony John's** poetry has appeared in *VLAK*, *Veers Away*, *Off and About*, the Poetry and Revolution International Conference anthology, *Herbarium*, *Greatworks*, *Freaklung*, *Writers Forearm* and *AND*. A collection of his poems *now than it used to be, but in the past* was published by Veer in 2009. He lives in London.  
*Continued on inside back cover*

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***Painted, spoken*** number 23 2012

*James Aitchison*

## **Breathing**

Sandstone is porous: little pockets of air  
between the grains of sand in sandstone walls  
are breathing spaces for the dead.

I heard them first in my grandparents' house  
through lath-and-plaster from the outer walls.  
My grandmother said it was rats;  
my grandfather mouthed dead names  
from the First World War.

I travelled to university by train.  
When it stopped in the tunnel east of Buchanan Street  
I inhaled dead men's tubercular breath.  
I felt them breath through my lungs.  
And when, all at once, the men inhaled,  
the suction started whirlpools in my brain.

Some nights my breathing keeps me awake:  
incipient emphysema and permaphlegm  
wheeping like a woodwind in my throat.

The oboe tuning up is out of tune;  
it sounds like dead men breathing  
through sandstone walls.



## **Sunspot #9**

Hail Etna, full of fire, the heat is with thee; blessed art thou amongst mountains, and blessed is the fruit of thy maw, Lava. Holy Etna, Hand Maiden of Sol, spray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our setting.

Simon Barraclough

Simon Barraclough  
**Sunspot #18**

Could it have known — as the disc accrued, as gravity drew all things to itself, as proto-planets formed in its skirts, came spinning like googlies  
the billion years of agony and from the back of the maker's hand — that it would oversee all this, the  
bliss, the Sun-kissed, fly-blown wounds of everything that exists?  
Sunspot #18

*Chris Beckett*  
***Throughout the Crisis***

Throughout the crisis, vanishing  
alternatives, rhetorical  
trenches, as every hot agency in London  
fought for space.

The table survived  
turbulent meetings and motions,  
its wave of walnut grain unmoved.

One wrote without correction  
to elude the anguish of waiting,  
another to address an imbalance  
in expected nominal values.

*Katy Evans-Bush*

## **Analogue**

I:

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

A drop of water  
drops, and then another, and then another:  
the water forms the record.

In the beginning  
they had to capture  
their food, their experience,  
and made the tools for both  
with what was to hand, with what  
would fit the hand. Rocks, plants,

Words.

Eventually.

That began with the awl:  
the brad awl,  
the stitch awl,  
the will-that-be awl,  
the awl or nothing.

The bone needle,  
the steel needle,  
the tattoo needle.  
The scrimshaw,  
the tapestry, the sophistry  
of the punctured argument,  
the sword of truth.

That sword: 'You can point with it:'  
and so, civilisation starts  
when the slashing stops,  
when the pointing (out) begins.

The stick dipped in dye,  
the animal comes to life.  
Again.

Eventually.

In the frown of precision  
Is our beginning.

The brush makes herds of the wall.  
The tablet is scored,  
the scores are set  
the hieroglyphs begin their cryptic work.  
The kids all want the latest pictograph,  
the coolest chisel.  
The hammer drops to nailhead.  
The drill finds the riverbed.  
The screwdriver finds its little mark.  
The knife scores the rind,  
the awl pierces leather,  
the tip of the pen  
hovers over paper;  
the nib of the pen,  
beak of a feather,  
touches that white expanse  
and changes us forever.  
The finger in the cake dough traces the bowl.

A string twangs, and twangs again.  
It makes a lyre of us all.  
It makes a lyre of the awl.

II:

Clunk. Click. Whirrrr.

The universe machine  
is fuelled by heat, light, matter:  
it's an engineering feat.  
Once upon a time,  
the universe's needle, the finger of the gods,  
the stylus of material form,  
pointed at the Big Bang.

BANG.

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

The universe's needle points,  
and makes the first song.  
And records it.

khkhkhkhkhkhkhkhkh

They play this number on the radio:  
the static sound of Ur-music, the muse  
ic of the strato  
spheres.

It is no less than this:  
the static is our soundtrack.

Air is not air; it is a conduit.  
Air is a medium. Air is a liquid  
on which is imprinted  
what flies through it (it is a pipe).

Nothing can be lost.  
We are the recording  
of the sound of ourselves  
being made.

thup

If 'dialogue' is a discourse  
between two people, rationally conversing,

And 'monologue' is the speech of a mere  
one (already we  
in soliloquy  
wonder whether we can be  
or not)

Then 'analogue' is the speech of none,  
utterance of the machine,  
the original bot, which can express  
only the thoughts of the universe:  
its cogs,  
its longings.

III:

scratch

scratch

scratch

Pen of Shakespeare,  
up in the atmosphere.

The muse is a polymath,  
so crank up the phonograph.

*And in these waves about us linger  
Songs of gnat, chansons of fly,  
Since God the Father made his finger  
stylus for our lullaby.*

*And in the poignant springtime eve,  
Songs of lover, lays of swain,  
Still echo: call it time's reprieve  
As what goes round comes round again.*

*Oh sing, my darling, let me capture  
Every sound from thy sweet throat!  
Mark your refrain upon my rapture,  
The air will tremble with each note.*

*For you and I are one, suspended  
In this liquid universe:  
Nor can our sweet love be ended.  
It's fossilised in every verse.*

IV:

The typewriter key hits home.  
The type bar hits the ribbon,  
ribbon spools, it is the DNA  
of imprintation. The penny drops.  
The wooden bird pecks.  
The platter drops  
in the jukebox;  
the jive bird hops,  
the stylus lifts itself,  
hovers, and drops.

Clunk click whirrrr

Jukebox drop, lindy hop,  
baby-don't-stop, 'the ever-moving stairs':  
yeah, 'blow apart our worries and our cares'.

*I loved my love in an opera box.  
I loved her with Enrico Caruso.  
I loved my love with a jitterbug.  
I loved her with a gramophone:  
Benny Goodman swung my girl,  
before a crooner smoothly wooed her.  
Along the watchtower I picked a flower  
And we wore it to San Francisco.  
Then I kissed her in a disco.*

Clunk.

Click.

Whirrrr.

V:

A tower rises from the ground  
and holds a needle to the sky.  
Punctures the mystery.

We sent the picture flying.  
We trapped the sound in a plate.  
Something 'went round and again went round':  
something we'd made.

Jagged waves come off the tower  
and hang in the air like fronds  
of the new tree of life in Ally Pally.  
High on its hill it watches us,  
its 'precise spiral groove',  
its 'transmitter'. On it,  
everything grows and,  
watching it, we live forever.

Don't wonder what power  
built these particular thunderbolts  
that sit on our horizon,  
communal horizon now receding:  
gateway to a future past  
that is the universe.

They were inventors,  
the people who made this. They are  
apocryphal. They are  
the new prophets. (Better  
a prophet than a loss.) They are  
the pointing fingers of the world,  
and we are their Big Bang.

BANG.

And still the universe sings  
its old love song

khkhkhkhkhkhkhkhkh

and down among those hunters of experience,  
innocent tormenters of experience,  
incisors of surfaces,  
makers of contraptions,  
meddlers with machines,  
fixers of wavelengths,  
chemical decoders,  
gelatin junkies,  
archivists of the physical dream,  
radio stars and video stars,  
some still sing along.

khkhkhkhkhkhkhkhkh

In its white noise all colours  
and all sounds are contained in potential.  
It shows us heaven  
in a cylinder of wax,  
in a slither of lacquer,  
in a vat of cellulose nitrate,  
in a light spray of silver,  
in a spool, in a reel,  
in a heavy steel canister.

But Paul is dead

Paul is dead

Paul is dead

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

VI:

*Oh, binary, sweet binary!  
Our intellectual finery!  
I lost my love in the digital gap,  
But better than that than an analogue sap,  
'cause code's the thing  
for utility's fling  
And 'information' is the new tap-tap.*

thup

thup

thup

thup

*Oh, binary! Sweet binary!  
Our tuning-fork-sans-tinery,  
I lost my skills in the digital gap,  
but better than that, I designed the app!  
Who needs a thing  
when there's programming?  
The new, utilitarian tap-tap.*

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

thup

Antony John

who rejects the loving concern of Susan  
brutal, amoral world. In the end,  
what I believe: in faith, hope and love -  
There is rot, but there's good wood,

you have tears, prepare to shed them for  
plump, self-admiring, nude wiseguys  
you have tears, prepare to shed them for  
trailing black rags, sails low above

who rejects the loving concern of Susan  
and big wigs are coming down for the  
trailing black rags, sails low above  
brutal, amoral world. In the end,

came then almost unbidden. It was  
In the end, one has to ask who  
came then almost unbidden. It was  
plump, self-admiring, nude wiseguys

and big wigs are coming down for the  
textiles and Velcro fastenings.  
what I believe: in faith, hope and love -  
textiles and Velcro fastenings.

desolate place, perhaps Central Asia,  
last members of the regiment  
But one sergeant stood out from the  
last members of the regiment

- bitter in his barrels and in his heart.  
finds himself the victim of departmental  
regulations. We know that what we  
But one sergeant stood out from the

regulations. We know that what we  
dark. Now, in a light which brightens  
It may be asked, why are the  
dark. Now, in a light which brightens

- bitter in his barrels and in his heart.  
In the end, one has to ask who  
ment about what it is. The necessity  
It may be asked, why are the

desolate place, perhaps Central Asia,  
ment about what it is. The necessity  
finds himself the victim of departmental  
There is rot, but there's good wood,

president, Hosni Mubarak.

Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin.

Vitamin D not only regulates

she unearths.

But let us also be clear about this:

president, Hosni Mubarak.

Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin.

prior to any shape imposed by concepts

of Vitamin D.

causes rickets.

causes rickets.

of Vitamin D.

and vivid green of mosses clinging to

the production of Vitamin D in the skin.

and vivid green of mosses clinging to

mothers who haven't had Vitamin D

Concrete slabs? Such things work well

doing their best to facilitate the process,

prior to any shape imposed by concepts

sometimes a single detail, such as a

sky beyond the far-off silhouette of

sky beyond the far-off silhouette of

she unearths.

sometimes a single detail, such as a

horrible visit to a moonlit lake. But it is

horrible visit to a moonlit lake. But it is

is a glimpse of verdant County Down

he emerges and of which he forms no

Vitamin D not only regulates

he emerges and of which he forms no

the production of Vitamin D in the skin.

Concrete slabs? Such things work well

lacking.

doing their best to facilitate the process,

But let us also be clear about this:

lacking.

is a glimpse of verdant County Down

mothers who haven't had Vitamin D

lacks. Either that or we really are

lacks. Either that or we really are

living out or have lived out - or haven't

yet lived out, but may - that he's been

The rules are there for a good reason:

see him, aided by his civil servant lover,

living out or have lived out - or haven't

yet lived out, but may - that he's been

up in the sheer billow of it. But for all

awareness for us in all sense experience.

of improving civil service management.

see him, aided by his civil servant lover,

as an ambitious civil servant, the love

of improving civil service management.

is a thing you must approach from the

ultimate, you know . . ."

The ultimate what? "The ultimate,

is a thing you must approach from the

The ultimate what? "The ultimate,

up in the sheer billow of it. But for all

ultimate, you know . . ."

such hapless adventurers.

bare fields, and in the leafless wood

and drains, it was "the most luxurious"

girl across a pond thick with duckweed

as an ambitious civil servant, the love

awareness for us in all sense experience.

tableaux for the spaces they came to

the veiled sunlight and falling snow,

tableaux for the spaces they came to

Host nation trucking does, indeed,

girl across a pond thick with duckweed

Host nation trucking does, indeed,

the veiled sunlight and falling snow,

and drains, it was "the most luxurious"

The rules are there for a good reason:

bare fields, and in the leafless wood

such hapless adventurers.

## **Marley**

*Hannah Lowe*

Kevin Macdonald's documentary is a wholly respectful tribute to Bob Marley, revealing a complexity of character far removed from the simplistic student poster image of the singer smoking a reefer, swathed in cannabis smoke. Here he emerges as an unexpectedly mysterious figure – a devoted Rastafarian, football fanatic and poetic lyricist, hugely driven in his social ambitions and completely committed to a music which one commentator tells us "saved him" from his own conflicted, mixed race identity.

Macdonald's own passion for Marley is evident in the candid testimonies he gains from former band members, producers, friends and family in the telling of a life story that evokes Jamaica's turbulent quest to define itself against British colonial rule and US control. Explanatory voice over is disregarded in favour of brilliant photographic and film montage and the narrative power of the music itself.

The film opens with technicolour scenes of Ghana's slave coast and the "door of no return" through which Marley's ancestors passed, "stolen from Africa", into the brutal Middle Passage and slavery in the Caribbean, a history at the core of Marley's socially conscious music. Then at Nine Mile, the impoverished rural location of his childhood, a cousin animatedly explains the hardships of their upbringing. The camera makes a lyric pan across the lush, misted hills of St Ann's, pausing at a tin shelter where men drink and smoke dejectedly, images which hint poignantly at the social and economic stasis of Jamaica, still critically afflicted by poverty and sectarian violence.

Trenchtown, where Marley spent his teenage years, is cited as a key locale in the musical development of The Wailers and birthplace of Rastafarianism. In an audio interview, Marley talks of the area's "heavy vibration" as the historical arrival point of slaves. The film-making verges on the expressionistic as the camera dreamily tracks an anonymous Rastafarian, Marley's "Natty Dread", as he moves through the town's yellow dust alleys, pictures which bring the past into the relief of the present again.

Brilliantly juxtaposed interviews of Marley's mother and aunt reveal the story of his father, Norval, a sixty-five year old white colonial supervisor who seduced his sixteen year old mother but played no role in his son's upbringing. The film makes much of Marley's skin colour and his victim of bullying as a "red pickney" but this remains surprisingly un-contextualised. There is no comment on the shadist organisation of Jamaican society, where pale skin procures high status, a legacy of plantation miscegenation and strongly echoed in Marley's parentship.

Rastafarianism is said to have reconciled Marley's conflicted identity and given The Wailers extraordinary focus, evident in their strict regimes of exercise and abnegation. On camera, Island Record

owner Chris Blackwell claims that Bunny Wailer was too lazy to stick to the UK tour schedule while Wailer insists that a tour of nightclubs was inappropriate to the band's religious principles. This divide, where Marley seemed more keen to embrace the commercialism of the music industry is pitched against Wailer and Tosh, both of whom left the band because of these differences.

Marley emerges as a well-intentioned peacemaker between the warring sides responsible for civil unrest in Jamaica, his political involvement leading to a botched assassination attempt days before a scheduled peace concert. Increasing gang warfare in Kingston was allegedly affiliated to the intense political rivalry between the centre-right Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) and the socialist People's National Party (PNP). At another peace concert we see Marley performing a wild shamanic dance before uniting opposition leaders Edward Seaga and Michael Manley on stage, a gesture redolent of a simple idealism.

The assassination attempt sends Marley into exile in the UK in 1976, emotionally "hurt" by a homespun attack. But it is cancer that kills him at thirty-six. Melanoma in his toe is mistaken for a football injury and amputation refused so Marley can continue to dance. Indeed we see wonderful footage of the band's five a side team kicking the ball in Battersea Park (where it is alleged they once played against the National Front) along with extensive concert footage of the Wailers in the later incarnation with the I-Three backing group, including Rita Marley. These colourful images are a sad contrast to the films closing shots of the emaciated singer in a snow-laden Germany where he fled in desperation to seek medical help. It is here that his dreadlocks fall out, a powerful metaphor for loss.

The film is unnecessarily long and yet it never fully engages with a number of issues, including the emotional fall-out of Marley's womanising, more than naming the number of children he has with different partners. Rita Marley speaks briefly of her acceptance of his adultery because his musical "mission" was more important, but there is pain in the words of Cedella Marley, his daughter, who tells of his hard-handed parenting and of how, even on his death bed she couldn't have a moment alone with him, surrounded as he always was by followers.

Likewise the film hedges around the relationship of Marley to Chris Blackwell (who produced the film with Marley's son Ziggy) though Macdonald does allow us to hear Peter Tosh refer to him as "Chris Whitewell". Blackwell's transformation of The Wailers into a rock-reggae act with dubbed over keyboards and guitar riffs may partially account for their success outside Jamaica, but the film could have responded to the common claim that Marley was the tokenistic "acceptable face" of reggae and questioned why he is still the only

reggae artist to have achieved world-wide acclaim. It is significant that Marley's music was being processed by the UK based Island Record "machine" at the same time Jamaican studios began to engineer heavily dubbed remixes of reggae. These versions often foregrounded bass and reverb to create a spiritual aesthetic, and with improvised "toasting", formed the musical staple of a ritualised, religious dancehall and sound-clash subculture, a far cry from the popular stadium concerts performed by The Wailers.

Macdonald includes a few of the standard numbers from *Legend*, but also rarer songs like the beautiful, acoustic "Selassie is the Chapel", the film's musical mix suggestive of Marley's multi-faceted character. Although there is more of a story to be told, the film is a fascinating and accomplished composition that pays great homage to this remarkable musician and cultural leader.

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

24.1.6

Aloof, and piling canvas against the wind  
For time to sabre pictures on.

**24.1.4**

A red-throated diver, the jut of its jaw.  
I'm weaving the waters in this old tub.  
The shafts rise on the rowlocks  
As I pull the oars to my bollocks.  
Land ahoy, like a whiff of smoked egg plant.  
Saint Brendan! With an heirloom like this,  
Do you reckon it's landfall tonight?

**23.1.4**

Ten years ago to the night, we came  
On a one-way ticket and a two-year contract,  
With a little girl, a little cash and a Christmas crib.  
Does the woman through the wall from that  
First, furnished flat still cry all night?  
Does the transvestite who beat his dog  
Have *regular* fistfights with the neighbour?  
Will his pal still call the police? My *embourgeoisement*  
Complete, I've no nostalgia for the womb,  
But I think it's time we left the incubator.

**23.1.1**

Since you return to her, as happy as  
Roebuck to a pond in the summer heat,  
You have to woo her.

Now every synapse swings you down  
That unexpected road to Rome,  
She must respond.

From any state of play it's mate  
In two moves now, unless  
You speak to her!

## **22.x.1**

WHEEEE!  
- WHOAH!  
- Why, whey face?  
... whew!

## **21.1.1**

Who was it?  
- Three wee kings:  
Said they're made of tar;  
A messenger called Hugh  
With a flat-top guitar;  
Hew Wood and Drew Water,  
Looking lost as their sheep.  
Huddle up to the kye, it's cauld!  
Poor baby: lips trembling blue,  
The hue of her cry.

## **21.11.1**

How?  
Adverbially.

## **23.11.1**

A palindrome!  
Wow!  
Paraprosopesis!

## **24.6.3**

A lisp is not  
A freckle on the lip  
Or a sting on the tongue  
Or a hasp on the cusp of clarity.  
It's a simple slip, a limp,  
A sibilant spill.

*Drew Milne*  
from ***Blueprints & Ziggurats***

'Schwitters here anticipated a recent insight that is spreading in architectural theory, and is summarized in the sentence: "Houses can fly."

Sigurd Bergmann, *Theology in built environments*

a lion protome  
perched on top  
of bank gothic

THE BIG A

Schwitters-ish assemblage

expanding towards Architektur

bits of newsprint ur-column

formen im raum -barn

leere im raum -kiosk

MANIFEST PROLETKUNST

down the

Spitzweg

very act of building act fragmentation

new valleys

hollows grottoes

catacombs

dance casino

deviant caves

doll housing

shoddy goods  
qua monument  
to the THIRD  
international  
bonk gawthic  
autonomy tone  
theses flaring  
friendly fires

#### PYRAMID AND LABYRINTH

vietnam follies via korea -park  
press baghdad destruct -skin  
Luigi Moretti pasted into -peak  
watergate apartments or -bark  
the fascist fascia sports -goth

#### SCAR LINEARITY

#### JUNTA NOSTRUM

down on the strip gloss awning  
vertical foyer glassy firing

#### PASSERELLES

#### MEDIATIZATION

#### DATUM PLANES

double strip wave slab

#### SECTIONS

#### THROUGH

#### WAR ZONE

©apital YE\$

gents polemical  
dose scepticism  
clerk bank goth  
strangled mesh

YES-SIR URBAN TISSUE

helical	OCULUS
scorch	CRYSTAL
marks	BEACON

hadrian's rusticated fringe now showing

CREDIBILITY GAPS

VILLA dancing club stuff

come Sun Space and Greenery

crown Gun Trace and Tuilerie

chrome Scum Grace Machinery

paste	PUREE
plate	GLASS
foyer	DRAIN

donut  
DOME  
cedar curves  
this defensible closet  
RAUM  
THIS CELESTIAL SOFFIT  
THIS REDUCTIVE FACTOR  
THIS SWALLOWING SCOWL  
THIS ZOOMORPHIC PROVINCE  
fondle mint  
torn U turn  
when dark slates roll  
OFF-AXIS URBAN WHISTLER  
mannerist manna

## **Better living through DIY: mapping Glasgow's underground music scene** *Stewart Smith*

Under the Scottish Government's Public Entertainment License law the organisers of temporary free exhibitions or public shows will need a licence costing between £124 and £7500. So far the Scottish Government has passed the buck, pointing out that the decision to charge fees is at the discretion of councils. Thanks to an energetic grassroots campaign, many councils have backtracked, offering assurances that they won't be charging, or, in the case of Glasgow, putting the issue out to public consultation. But even if councils choose not to charge for licenses, the process of applying for them makes putting on a small gig, exhibition or performance needlessly complicated and drawn out. Factor in Creative Scotland's potentially ruinous decision to do away with core funding, and you're left with the impression that the powers that be have little understanding of how to sustain a grassroots music and arts scene.

All too often, politicians and the media measure the value of creative communities in terms of their success stories. It's all about those who make it, with the grassroots scene simply being a staging post on the way to fame and fortune. This does a great disservice to local scenes. That a few Scottish artists and musicians have achieved international recognition is undoubtedly a good thing for the communities that spawned them. But what about those who don't 'make it' or have little interest in or expectation of commercial success? A healthy scene needs its stars, its enthusiastic amateurs and everyone in between. Kill off the DIY exhibitions and gigs and you not only kill off a city's capacity to produce future stars, you make life poorer for everyone, audiences included. As I wrote in Glasgow City Council's online consultation, 'the social benefits of maintaining a strong grassroots arts and music scene – and, if we must, the economic ones – are huge. For many people, myself included, Glasgow's vibrant and plural cultural scene is a major reason for choosing to live here. Why ruin that?'

So what does that scene look like? Glasgow is a city of many complementary scenes and my interest here is not in the commercial indie world of lad rockers, precious singer-songwriters or bearded young men peddling mopey anthems. Instead, I'll be looking at the current independent and DIY music scene, one which is currently in rude health, if somewhat localised and niche. A can-do spirit, combined with an openness to different sounds and styles, prevails. Punk, noise and metal rub shoulders with folk, improv and the latest electronic mutations. While led by young musicians, artists and promoters, the scene has benefited from the inspiration and support of an older generation of DIY and clubbing veterans. My focus isn't so much on individual acts as the institutions and anti-institutions. I'll be mapping the venues and alternative spaces

where fresh creative energies intersect with Glasgow's past: a psychogeography, of sorts.

Let's begin at the Charing Cross end of St Vincent Street. The 'iconic' and 'legendary' King Tut's. Not a DIY or underground venue, but worth mentioning as a point of departure. Tut's is one of the busiest venues in Britain, putting on touring bands and local support acts most nights. Tut's still trades on its status as the place where Oasis signed their deal with Alan McGee's Creation Records (for a while the gent's urinal was officially 'the wonderwall'). It sells itself as a rite of passage for up and coming bands, and in fairness, if your ambitions lie in the more commercial indie mainstream a gig at Tut's can be useful. But the venue's policy of offering support acts a ticket deal is questionable. Local acts will be given tickets to sell, of which Tut's must receive at least half of the face value. This is not quite the hated pay-to-play scheme operated by less scrupulous promoters and agents ('You should be grateful for the chance to play' is the mantra of such crooks). With Tut's, unless they sell the tickets to friends and family at a knock-down rate, bands will not lose any money. They might even make a little and land further gigs with DF Promotions. But it does appear to mean bands who don't bring in the punters won't get asked back, regardless of merit. Perhaps that's fair enough; Tut's is a commercial enterprise and it is not in the business of taking chances on untested acts. But there are other ways of doing things, where the focus is on cooperation instead of competition and commercialism. Why not just cut out the middleman and get together with some like-minded acts to book your own show in one of the city's scuzzy and atmospheric venues? Or play for promoters who actually believe in you and will simply pay you a guarantee or a cut of the door takings?

Okay, rant over. There have always been alternatives to the more commercial venues and promoters. In the '90s you had the young Alex Kapranos booking scrappy and brilliant acts at the (old) 13<sup>th</sup> Note (for more, see Nicola Meighan's fascinating interview with Kapranos and scene veteran RM Hubbert at [thequietus.com](http://thequietus.com)) and the righteous DIY activities of Glasgow Musician's Collective, many of whose members are still active in the scene. In the past ten years Glasgow has benefited from the advent of vegan cafe/music/art spaces Mono and Stereo, as well as scene stalwarts like the 13<sup>th</sup> Note Cafe and Nice & Sleazys. Then there are the DIY and independent promoters who run on a non-profit basis and put on local acts alongside touring underground bands, often using alternative spaces such as galleries, warehouses and studios. The same period has also seen the closure of several record shops, but the remaining specialist stores are without peer. Situated in the alternative shopping nook of King's Court (a successor, of sorts, to the lamented Virginia Galleries) Monorail is Mono's in-house

alternative indie mecca, filled to the brim with tasty vinyl and co-owned by Stephen McRobbie, of indie legends The Pastels, and local hero Dep Downie. Two miles west, down a back lane in the Finnieston stretch of Argyle Street, there's experimental music haven Volcanic Tongue, run by *Wire* magazine writer David Keenan and musician Heather Leigh Murray. The CCA's excellent independent book store, *Aye Aye*, also sells a small, but intriguing, selection of CDs and vinyl, and there are several second hand charity shops worth scouring.

My introduction to the DIY scene was through promoters Nuts & Seeds in the mid-noughties. Run by a small collective of artists and musicians, Nuts & Seeds had a strong identity, promoting their weirdo punk and noise-rock gigs with striking posters featuring original artwork. It's an approach that has been continued and expanded upon by Cry Parrot. More eclectic than their predecessors, Cry Parrot's inclusive music policy takes in everything from scuzzy punk and kaleidoscopic electronica, to Saharan trance rock and wild-eyed avant-folk. They have also made an effort to offer an alternative to the standard gig experience, putting on dance parties and festivals in warehouses, art spaces and community centres, as well as more conventional venues.

'I started Cry Parrot as I felt there should be more people supporting grassroots music in Scotland, and at that time (I was 18 years old) a lot of my friends' bands were being exploited by "pay-to-play" promoters.' explains head Parrot, Fielding Hope. 'Over the years I've branched out to work on festivals and more ambitious projects, but I think the original DIY ethos is still there. I still love what I do and it doesn't feel like a job - which of course is a good thing!'

Artist David Shrigley is a prominent supporter of Cry Parrot, designing posters for them and DJing several of their events: 'Cry Parrot represents all that is great about the Glasgow cultural landscape: a DIY attitude towards presenting wonderful, interesting and peculiar musical events to the people of the city based on passion, curiosity and generosity rather than a desire for profit or personal gain. When people ask me why I choose to live in Glasgow, I would cite the fact that people like Cry Parrot do what they do here as one of the reasons'.

Cry Parrot's biggest achievement to date is September 2011's Music Is The Music Language, a three day festival held in and around SWG in Yorkhill, a warehouse art space tucked between the Balloch trainline and the Clyde Expressway. Co-organised with Edinburgh-Fife-Glasgow promoters Tracer Trails with help from Edinburgh's Braw Gigs and Glasgow tape label and punk rock party starters Winning Sperm Party, Music Is... was a thrilling testament to their independent values. 'Underground music is strongest and most exciting where and when the values of diversity, cooperation,

inclusiveness, generosity and fun are most vigorously defended,' Hope and Tracer Trails' Emily Roff told me in an interview for *The List*. 'It's the fact that these so-called genres are constantly cross-pollinating in Glasgow that allows amazing stuff to happen here. So, hopefully the festival celebrates that and encourages it too.'

During the day, you could attend generator gigs in the scrubby yard of the nearby Glasgow Sculpture Studios and under a motorway bridge. There's a mildly transgressive thrill to such events, as they bring these liminal zones to noisy life, rupturing the official narrative of the city. The evening saw sets from many of Glasgow's most exciting acts. A non-hierarchical and party-friendly approach to programming saw internationally renowned artists such as folk singer Alasdair Roberts and underground hero Richard Youngs play relatively early slots, while higher energy acts took later slots. Highlights included Muscles of Joy, a feminist post-punk collective who suggest an art school communion between the Raincoats and hobo composer Moondog, all homemade percussion and imprecise but magical harmonies. There was Lee 'Kylie Minoise' Cumming's reactivated guitar army Opaque, yielding maximum overtone and texture from a single relentlessly struck chord. Momus collaborator Ben Butler & Mousepad brought neon-hued synth funk, while Tattie Toes served a heady brew of Basque, Balkan and Scottish folk, post-punk and free improvisation. On the noisier end of the spectrum you had Ultimate Thrush's gonzo thrash, the precision violence of Divorce and the gothic space-rock of Vom... A landmark event? Quite possibly, but one which wore its significance lightly. As Roff and Hope testify, 'having a good time is top priority.'

Cry Parrot recently celebrated their fifth birthday with a party in the Glue Factory, a former industrial space off Garscube Road in Maryhill. In addition to being an art and clubbing space, the Glue Factory is home to Green Door recording studios, who use the old glue silo as a reverb tank. Tracer Trails, meanwhile, have diversified into various projects, including the wonderful Archive Trails, where Alasdair Roberts & Shane Connolly, Drew 'Wounded Knee' Wright and Aileen Campbell spent several months at the School of Scottish Studies, drawing on archival material to create new works. Roff is currently involved with the Kinning Park Project, a Victorian school turned community centre – and it really is a community centre, receiving no funding from the council. A recent event there incorporated a barbecue, a roller-derby, and a karaoke session with a live band. Not an experience you'd get at an O2 arena.

Hope and Roff have also had input into the Counterflows, a new festival of experimental music run across Glasgow, London and Berlin. Organised by Alastair Campbell, formerly of Stirling's Tolbooth venue, and Hamish Dunbar from London's avant-garde hotbed Cafe Oto, Counterflows should hopefully go some way to filling the gap left by the pioneering experimental festivals (Instal,

Le Weekend, Kill Your Timid Notion and Subcurrents) which graced Scotland in the Noughts. Cry Parrot and Tracer Trails both curated events for Counterflows, bringing noisy basement gig action and a Kinning Park assembly hall recital to an already rich line-up.

Away from the 'headline' exhibitions, much of the recent Glasgow International Festival of Visual Arts felt like an outgrowth of the underground arts and music scenes. There were several performance pieces involving music and sound, including High-Slack-Low-Slack-High, a series of site-specific works responding to the tidal cycle of the Clyde, involving Hanna Tuulikki of Two Wings and Nalle; velvet-toned BBC radio presenter, record producer and vintage synth enthusiast John Cavanagh; and musician-artist Douglas Morland. And then there were all the gigs and dance parties in studio spaces and gallery spaces. The Old Hairdressers, situated in the former Daily Record distribution depot in Renfield Lane, was one of the hubs for this music/art crossover, putting on numerous gigs (lo-fi punk to free jazz), performance pieces and talks, while also screen-printing a daily festival paper, *Prawn's Pee*. *The Guardian* noted GI's 'liberating spirit of openness and local involvement' and I think that has a lot to do with the way in which the music and art scenes here operate.

Let's end our *dérive* in West Princes Street. This long residential street running parallel to Woodlands Road and Great Western Road already has a place in Glasgow Music History, being the home of Postcard Records. For some time, the St George's Cross end of the street has been somewhat dilapidated, although locals have recently transformed a gap site into a wonderful community garden. Cheap rents and proximity to the Art School have meant a particular close has become a hub for DIY activities, hosting house gigs and meetings of the anti-institutional Glasgow Open School. The huge tenement living room makes a great intimate gig space, where bands can just plug in their amps and blast away. You bring your own booze, leave a donation in the ceramic pineapple and enjoy an experience you simply can't get in a professional venue. Should the licensing laws be enforced, such spontaneous and vital happenings would be impossible.

These tiny DIY gigs aren't necessarily going to produce the next big thing, but that's not why they matter anyway (but, by the way, Franz Ferdinand practised and played in The Chateau, a former industrial building off Bridge Street). As a scholar of small press and little magazine scenes, the parallels with the DIY music scene are clear to me. You have artists taking the means of production into their own hands, or at least working with sympathetic institutions. Instead of mimeoed mags and letterpressed chapbooks you have handmade CD-Rs and tapes. And just as the mimeograph revolution dissolved boundaries between literature and visual art, the DIY music scene involves artists and poets too. Go to a Psykick

Dancehall gig and you'll get junk-based noise-making, Bob Cobbing inspired sound poetry and the odd tour-de-force reading from Peter Manson. It's about the community, where people co-operate and inspire each other. These shows are not passive experiences. The open and participatory nature of the scene means that boundaries between performer and audiences are blurred. It's apt that 'The Second Life', Edwin Morgan's great poem of 1960s Glasgow should come to mind. He writes of 'that rising spirit that all things are possible... a city's renewed life that stirs me...' It's a feeling I recognise from living in the Glasgow of today. All the more reason to fight the council and government plans and let Glasgow flourish.

Glasgow City Council consultation:

[www.glasgowconsult.co.uk/Glasgow/kms/dmart.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar](http://www.glasgowconsult.co.uk/Glasgow/kms/dmart.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar)

### **An Information *Richard Price***

Has anyone noticed we are living in the Burgess Shale times of poetry? Ok, yes, it is not original to note the diversity! - *Continues regardless*. Fossils found in the Burgess Shale landslip in Canada suggest a massive plurality of life way way back in geological time: life that doesn't exist today but inhabited a macro-ecology of apparently immense interchange and sophistication. Your sometime editor is finding it difficult to keep up with the very much living life of poetry today, while also recognising that a totalising view of (a) contemporary life, (b) the entire history of poetry and its intersections - on which any true analysis of today's field must surely rely - is impossible. So the continuing adventures of a born list-ista continue.

"I'm blue on you like a holy trinity, a door unto voluptuous" says the 'Colour Calendar' of Amy De'Ath's *Caribou* (Bad Press). "Swordfish be numb across my back right / solid.." says Francesca Lisette's "Pas de grip (Election Song)" in the book that collects, so handsomely, most of her published poems to date: *Teens* (Mountain). Both these books help the reader to get a better fixing on what I, anyway, regard as a particularly interesting grouping at the moment, roughly speaking around the *Beyond Language* anthology, but with locating co-ordinates including the Brighton Chlorine reading series of a little while ago, so presumably University of Sussex, too, and support from Jeff Hilson's Crossing the Line series. Interesting because: the "I" is emphasised within intellectual discourse (not raconteurism,

though I like that too!) and within pattern; the "I" is pivoted on very outdated rhetorical tactics – a weakness in these poets is a risible alas and alack tactic - which become updated through their techniques (showing 'outdated' is a fickle concept). I suppose Cambridge and Prynne are in there somewhere, too, though that's hardly to say much these days for contemporary poetry. The blogger Bebrowed provides some helpful commentary for one or two of the Beyond Language people. He / She has an eccentric interest in both hide-bound modernists and pop modernists (I like eccentricity like that, even if we're going to have to disagree on details and Bebrowed's penchant for( sketchily evidenced) 'best this' and 'best that', is seriously iffy, but there's a modesty in his/her commentary that sensibly underlies the simplistic best-ism . See [bebrowed.wordpress.com](http://bebrowed.wordpress.com) .

I wonder what other scenes there are? I like the idea of schools, or at least self-conscious groupings with a broadly shared aesthetics and opinions about aesthetics made public. There's an understandable resistance to this – manifested in the idea of the single (brilliant) poem as the unit of artistry within poetry. That's fine – no-one is against the great single or album track in music, after all –and I guess competitions, publications in magazines here and there, and so on are in a similar way part of that 'here's the single' culture, but I do like work which exists within a circuit of solidarity and ideas, poets producing their own anthologies, magazines, and presses. Perhaps the post-surreal group Stop / Sharpening / Your / Knives – Norwich one of the co-ordinates this time – is one such. Painted, spoken's entire editorial board would like to hear more about such scenes, in detail please.

Back to Language might be a sub-title for Giles Goodland's teasing, vast project *Gloss*. I would see this – I did warn you I was a shallow lister – as having an affinity somehow with Frank Kuppner's so funny indexing Arioflotga, Goodland's own earlier dictionary collages, and Tony Lopez's similar techniques. Like those, it takes a little while to see flurries of pattern and rhythm. What first seems dry becomes in Goodland's hands comic, richly allusive, and even wise. *Gloss* is a modern classic.

*Formerly*, poems by Tamar Yoseloff, photos by Vici MacDonald, is an integrated work published by Hercules Editions – the photographed relics of London shop fronts meet fragmented sonnets of near-erased lives, culminating in the last piece which is itself a compendium of bits and bobs

from the earlier poems – a clever way to suggest, almost against the grain of the book in a way, the recycling energy of London, despite its sorrows and squalor. This is a handsome, impressive start for this new press, a beautiful book-object.

It is not completely gratuitous to link *Formerly* to *cris cheek's part: short life housing* (published by The Gig a few years ago), a selected writings with London's large grubby heart at its core. As Caroline Bergvall says, there's "at least two hundred years of grime, greed and energy you'll find distilled in the cellular lines and ink splashes of this great volume."

Jessica Pujol I Duran's *Now Worry* (DeptPress) uses a blocked but gappy paragraph as the stanza unit. There's a delicacy and a sense of humour in these poems, surprised and perhaps appalled at the comedy of being. I like the balance of particularity and abstraction, and the ambiguous pauses: "Stop being poor      Now take my bag / of stardust and sail to the moon."

I'm trying to think of an analogy for powerful impression for Hannah Lowe's *The Hitcher* (Rialto). I think it's filmic – the incredible power of the opening piece "Fist" in which a party scene seems to collapse somehow backwards and in slow motion at the same time, all around the stark opening declaration, "When my brother put his fist through a window." The breathing control of the long sentences, we're in a car crash (metaphorically speaking) and we're in a flashback almost beyond help now – and the milieu details of that youth, create a quite brilliant opening. As the pamphlet unfolds there are several 'stories' across the book – with Lowe's Jamaican background very lightly crossing the path of her English side with the focus here more on the pains and exhilarations of young adulthood. There is a loss of overall narrative cohesion across the book (let's face it *most* collections have that loss, and poets might want to think more about that problem – perfect poem-ism doesn't answer another kind of need, singles are different from albums) – but in that sense this pamphlet is of the classic *Introducing...* kind, rather than a one-theme sequence. It beautifully showcases a poet with both technical command and emotional range – and, almost as significant, interesting and even important stories to tell. Her next collection will be *Chick* (Bloodaxe 2013), where, according to advance publicity, the Chinese Jamaican side of her story will form the main strand.

That's a neat wrongfooting of a title, as, according to the poem in *The Hitcher*, it is actually the mysterious nickname given to her father by his friends. I can't wait to read that new book.

Others which I've liked since last we met and which I now commit the terrible crime of simply listing with favourite quotes and the metaphorical thumbsup (for what my thumb is worth): Caroline Clark's *Saying Yes in Russian* (Agenda), "weightlessness takes the strain", "Her agony, their translucent / delight"; Peter Daniels's *Counting Eggs* (Mulfran) – "Unashamed wonderment in trains, the love / of the moving device, orderly and noble."; and the anthology – to which I contribute admittedly – *Adventures in Form: A Compendium of Poetic Forms, Rules & Constraints*, which does exactly what its sub-title says it does. Oh and look at the latest issues of Julie Johnstone's one poem only magazine *less* – Thomas A Clark (10), Alan Spence (11), and Barrie Tullett (12) don't need no backup singers, 'k?

I suppose being a lister, a libertarian librarian (in my own head, at least), you will be thinking I actually have no critical faculties. I defend my rough and ready cataloguing as a democratising impulse which shouldn't require potted or (better) longer, feature reviews – they're for someone else. Speaking of which, there has rightly been recent talk about reviews out there overpraising poetry right across the aesthetic spectrum. From yummy blurbs to chummy notices, it's true, from interest group to interest group. As a counter to this I have started to encourage a mystery shopper effect in live readings, inviting people to come with me to gigs they would never go to normally, sharing other people's work with friends from different traditions. I bet it's not an original idea, but I think we should do more of that. The workshop I was actively a part of for some fifteen years did this as a matter of course because we came from very different places aesthetically, geographically, gender wise, and to some degree in class terms. My view of the current scene, in part derived from my mystery shopper friends, is that almost of all it is mildly of interest, with some awful things all around us – when mystery shopper tends to cringe he or she is usually right. I wouldn't have seen it without that! The overall scene is friendly, friendlier than it has been for years and that is a very good thing, and there needs to be the current *ok* for there to be better things on the way, so that isn't the 'damning indictment' it sounds like (why are indictments

always damning by the way?). Very little is deeply thought-provoking, breathtaking, *transporting*, very little of it is exquisite, very little has emotional heft, very little has a necessary political animus or intelligence (the 'intelligent' appear to be sentimental for the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its political theories). It's not what one might expect from the recent period, now declining, when access to education was as widespread as it's likely to get for a long time. But is there even a correlation? The squander of privilege and proxy privilege! (the token state school-ers allowed to play in the posh sand pits, but who largely just end up working the same command structure). This is a struggle in part with myself (a self-accusation to try and kick-start a different approach), as well as with my friends and my acquaintances in the poetry biz, and it may also be a question of defining what range of responses we expect our different audiences to get from our different poetries (exciting / inspiring / transformational isn't the only thing you can get – they sound like publicity words – but across the whole range of performed poetry right now the biggest element I'm getting is a kind of trudging worthiness (nice friendly worthiness; dry boring worthiness; trendy worthy; teacherliness; pattern with spikes for worthiness; worthy who made something in the fume cupboard he'd liked to show you, it was really clever). Ugh! Hmmm, maybe I should stay in more.

**Contributors.** (Continued from front inside page): **Hannah Lowe** studied American Literature at the University of Sussex and has a Masters degree in Refugee Studies. Her pamphlet *The Hitcher* was published by The Rialto in 2011; her collection *Chick* will be published by Bloodaxe in 2013. **Peter McCarey** is the author of the study *MacDiarmid and the Russians* and many poetry collections, including *Collected Contraptions* (Carcanet). He lives in Geneva. **Drew Milne** is the Judith E Wilson Lecturer in Drama and Poetry, Faculty of English, University of Cambridge. His books of poetry include *Sheet Mettle* (1994), *Bench Marks* (1998) and *Go Figure* (2003). *Blueprints & Ziggurats* is forthcoming from Shearsman. Website: <http://drewmilne.tripod.com/> **Stewart Smith** is a freelance arts writer and PhD candidate at the University of Strathclyde, researching the poetry, art and publications of Ian Hamilton Finlay and Alec Finlay.

# Painted, spoken

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