

Painted, spoken

edited by Richard Price

number 28

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) to 63 Artizan Court, Noel Park Road, London, N22 6ED

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

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Dorothy Lehane
sternum vulgaris

my eyewhites aren't exactly eyewhite. why oh why oh why weren't you born in may. may is the month for all kinds of special business & devotions to the blessed virgin mary. I'm gonna copy you big sister & i'm gonna copy your hair & your trousers & notice where they fall in relation to your ankles & i'm gonna buy me them pixy boots. big sister screams *don't you know you have been sworn to secrecy*. can't argue with querulants. yak yak without pause. how dull & terrible to have been clinically planned. all these new baby starlings. these are unattached processes. no menses. no menses ever again. come & drink Russian Standard with me: the camellia is shedding & i am lonely. we can scream *we don't want to be fat girls* at the starlings nested in the chimney at the top of the house. maybe they will stop bating me at 5am. i am so afraid of the tiny tubes under my skin. fuck *i am sick therefore i am*: fuck that. the birds remind me things are small & big with their loose mimicry. it isn't song, it's crushing on your brother because he is standing in a good light.

Section 3

god child swum swum into a cramped up heap
Snap out of it the mother tongue mother child
brushing her long hair
reprogramming begins when the godchild
learns truth is perceptual
truth depending on & guarded by
the frustration of infancy & infants
mother under treatment for organic psychoses
sick civilians
Life versus bullet
Giddy Giddy wound
reprogramming begins she she
she
learns truth is perceptual
plots are Passion
mother's alarm swims Hell is a sensory unit
plants are swum spun open
we first embrace she pleads
warn the world wound out
Stay with danger languages tongues of peril
scars in a new risk in our ken
who knows risk
close up & catastrophic

Amy Anderson

Heat

The day has been arduous with sun again
we have begun to evolve muscle for it,
I think, at the brow and shoulder blade
to shelter our eyes and porcelain.
No one will eat but we all drink like krill
siphoning salt using only our skin
and forget winter's myth.

and we become hungry for a certain
fall of the light, though no-one likes
to say it out loud I can see it when they
stare at their lager they're thinking of
Callanish or the symbols of the Picts
and they feel closer suddenly to the old ways,
power tingles in their naked feet like grass
and they have to go inside to cool
in case they unleash a power beyond themselves.
and all night, I will watch the wakeful sky
with a true passing tenderness.

Robin Fulton Macpherson

FAR ENOUGH

As when someone walks out to a cliff-edge
not caring to look down

so on this shortest of nights earth pauses
fearful that further north

there will be nothing but light suffering
a slow death from the absence of darkness.

LIKE

As the moon's desert
looks
cool as autumn mist,

as the marbled cloud
looks
solid as wet sand,

as the imagined
tree-shape in thin air
looks
fibrous and alive
as the felled sycamore.

WHY NOT THE WORDS?

Cold wet sand in the mid-Forties
refuses to be forgotten,
likewise
primulae in the mid-Fifties
arriving along dank ditches
as if pale from astonishment.

But why not the words for coldness,
wetness, paleness, astonishment?
Ready to leave again so soon
they touch down on my clear surface
the way night-moths pause on windows
a gleam on one side, darkness on one.

TURNING-POINT

The longest day and the brightest midnight:
earth's slow lean northwards has paused.

The black tree tops are the heads and shoulders
of an agitated crowd who can't see
where the threat is coming from.

DRIVING THROUGH MIST

Driving through nowhere, both middle and far
distance
no longer elements of the known world –

I'm confronted by a pine-tree that seems
for one
moment without beginning without end
to be
the one and only pine in history.
It leans
in over me from many centuries.

Next day. Same road. The tree's one of a crowd.
Sunlight
is an inquisitor missing nothing.
The tree
is defiant now, staring back at me
as if
it hadn't been to the ends of the earth
and back.

ARBOREAL

They have such a long after-life
never quite reaching after-death.
They seem to breathe without breathing.

Outside dreams they can stand as still
as stone that holds up cathedrals.

Inside dreams, they leave me unsure
if I am walking past the pines,
if the pines are walking past me.

Even felled ones may saunter by
the way dead friends, dead parents do.

A CHILD IN THE 1940s

On my way to the larger view
I was distracted by three smells
all closer to earth than heaven.

Wet peat banks of a thin burn – that's
up the moor behind Shiskine Manse.
Onions stored for the winter – that's
in Tom Hislop's workshop, Gala.
Creosoted garden twine – that's
in Anderson's, Traill Street, Thurso.

Eternity waited for me:
it was an amiable cloud
heedless of the passing of time.

from **The Syllabary**
Peter McCarey

2.1.20 **Boole**

And or
Not and
Or not

23.1.20 **Wool**

The sound of the word is wrong.
Take the Arabic *suf*,
Keep *wool* for wisdom.

23.3.20

A wall
Is a law
A rock wall made out in the dark
A stone wall made up in the cold
In the rain, to guard against *it*
Against *them*
And to trap its maker.

22.3.20 *Per fonte Branda non darei la vista* (**Inferno XXX**)

There are three big, whiskered carp in Fonte Branda
That swim into the focus of Dante's net. Not
The handycam, adrift like a retina, not
Knowledge, that drinks a stream to catch a trout,
But the laurel wind, the dawn wind daily
Reinvent the whorl.

21.3.20 **Evening Times**

The hall was dark
And full of doors.
There was one that barked
And one that snored.
A haul of skate and mackerel
Glimmered and dripped on curling lino.

20.3.20

Coral bud
Copper coil
A crawl of scree
Off a col like a hawser.
Sound, an island,
Call
And I'll be back with the echo.

20.2.20

We got coal for scrap iron from men with horses
My dad's work made boilers. The kettle screamed.
I didn't trust coal: that husky tinkle,
Dirty big jute bags of black false teeth.

In Lourdes School, beside the playground,
Was a coalshed half the size of Ibrox Park.
If you didn't drown in the dunes of coal, at the bottom
You found yourself on the shore of a sacred stream.

21.2.20

Gimme that thing o mine back or I'll knock your melt in
- Whole numbers; commutable sums.
Anything more complex and it's theology,
Insurance and the root of minus n.
There's a hole in all our arguments
We fill by falling in.

21.2.1 Eclogue

Hoe
Yourself
I'm hot enough
Trying
To dig up
Words in this weather

20.3.1

There's nothing shy nor coy
And nothing sweet to cloy
But there's more to the hoodie than
Caw and claw to the crow.
There's a resonant, woody cluck;
I'm told there's some can talk.
Nothing else that size'll
See off kites and cats.

James Aitchison

Moss

Winter months have been mild. Moss has thickened and spread across the lawn where its quilt patches are greener than the grass. (I add a sulphate of nitrogen each year to give the grass a deeper shade of green.)

Moss sponges on rain, sleet, hail, snow, mist and dew. All kinds of moisture glisten on blades of grass. Raked out, moss doesn't decompose like fallen leaves or cut grass. (I use a specific ferrous herbicide, but moss persists.)

Moss once staunched wounds, absorbed twenty times its weight in menstrual blood or bowels' skittering. It insulated reindeer herders' boots. Stiffened with clay or shit, it plugged gaps in cabins' and hovels' walls.

Earth-moving machines in Ireland are digging out thousands of years of carbon trapped in moss that has weathered down to peat. It's shipped from Wexford in hundred-litre bags for gardeners. I add peat to salt-free gritty sand and mix it with moss-killing, grass-greening chemicals. I could say I'm returning moss to the land.

Moss is primeval; it grew before there was grass. Moss propagates by microcosmic spores.

April, and the lawn's still waterlogged. The rhythms of the seasons have been lost. Footprints on sodden grass can last for hours. I leave no footprints when I tread on moss: the flattened little humps puff up again.

Drew Milne
SILICON GLITCH

quick and dirty solutions fox in rust
or find lit nights for global blights
all plastic pyres over decaying plant
over every lichen lettered windowsill
 each ecological niche
 grown into its island
 of carbon cliché sung
 by the inch worm tort
such retrograde farming, human growth
over the factory of scripted willings
down take that stabs at time off from
dreamt emissions with the city filter
 bright bleed and even
 excessive collections
 become severed treats
 to such went existing
meanwhile sheep in Libya graze on low
aspicilia esculenta and even in Japan
umbilicaria settles down in salad and
in deep fried fat not to mention cars
 as to still democracy
 can't live up scenery
 for class war etching
 into the grassy ditch
and the heavy fireworks that flounder
amid new calls for lichen sanctuaries
falling on ears set to leafless right
stacked before our cup runneth nought
 how come cash is kept
 coming up checker tie
 for a megaphone drawl

 made out to franchise
some taste fridge in kettle's kitchen
done cut brass to scallops so clogged
and in flames for the planet's collar
all silk sung stains gone to liveries
 even strange will say
 the musk bark liquids
 cannot turn substrate
 over a global vitrine
over lost vellum, over gelatin hooves
sleep lost in a mercurial now falling

short into mud slung footnotes & lows
then take that turn for the burst sun

SPECIES COMPANIONS ARE US

to rust and livery sprawl
the velvet surrealists as
comrades still after this

to be so the heady helium
up up in the dilapidation
is that the noun schooner

with a look in their eyes
going go on be my species
people are a weeping wall

vividly in binding trance
down to the data scramble
where the berries do fire

it is this surely verdant
dross with the grump bled
we just need a bigger hut

the moth architecture for
reprising dark mutations:
smile to become exemplary

PARTICULATES

no, they'll want you down and dirty
every last log in the owned natural
and with wildly tortured affections
in organic spelling on and on until
they have you in their sugared palm
and can spell the plastic victories

 blooming energies gone liner nothings
 remains unread down a purple symmetry
 how quantum skips over mr white space
 without font matter in bliss of wimps
 quirk all told in the colliding gloom
 clamping life
 to the thread
 cars in a nod

in contrails of every soft beverage
every subliminal advert saying burn
with you, yes you, nailed to chokes
and buttered parsnips of image fire
 tune over easy in the chemical
 humanities where the molecular
 LEDs and dongles show sackbuts
 the caged canaries in agronomy
 or in clones, found paths
 to dawn in scanning prose
 this too a spent gleaning
 and all bookish asterisks
 in courts of fossil plant
 dream not of pens
 that are syringes
 of darker ecology
 such succour made to ease
 as to surf up onto frozen
 drifts giving up to nouns
 dream only clouds
 in lichen archive
 in before any law
 oh pass the harmonium the
 sick bucket oh and parcel
 postage stamps as lichens
 to dazzling torts
 amid group haunts
 and fleet returns
 cushions to harbour sleet
 where the word limit hugs
 itself to a brevity thing
 finding in darks the keep

giving up the art realtor
tuning up diamonds as lichen stars
standing room only for nightingales
beside the nitrogen fixing subtexts
the swift bubble wrapping
to compose a fresh miasma
dream on, toggled
scum for scumbles
dead to abstracts
and the stew in the bland
aporia of our ancient dog
come music hall analogies
all flagging guns
all spin to drift
the market strain
not quite the ticket moss
or lichens of sun sliding
to make a vengeance plaza
but then the slow
over canvas slips
in the real stain
some hunt of the cloud
getting set for stones
over air-born or spall
postage stamps on light carbon
the water marks carping and as
concrete ode on brutalist soil
all done the going slumps
by the name of not unless
there a talk as of recall
and toss records, grand revelations
to make up percentages as something
resembling nothing so much as verbs

Hazel Frew
VOYAGER

At first, try chemotherapy
aim – to shrink

dosing by dripping
attached by a link

the plastic tube
liquid drop
pip pip.

She sees herself on a ship
the other patients as passengers
all ages, wig types
searches for a ticket
some kind of boarding pass

the washable armchair
beech wings
arm plugged in
porthole door swing.

8hr voyages you didn't plan to make
didn't want to take
smell of the tide, rise of the sides
this mal de mer leading nowhere.

PUCE

flame, excoriation
melting blistery skin-slide

peeling, peeled
curlicues of skin
drop, gather on the floor

withered citrus
wet from head to foot
open pore

the top layer is gone
you glisten, suppurate
snail-trail, stick

stick to objects, clam up
find small talk tricky
red face rictus

now grafting, suture
connective pink
a slow brick by brick build

until you are patchwork, present
wrinkled, puce
reborn to the world.

SCOTOMAS

A squint of sunlight
a squirt of lemon juice
scotoma, scintilla of dots

these little rapids
torn pieces of aperture
your eyeful of sidelight alerting the plot.

Scene 1 –
a head mask,
shrunk to the scalp of you
accelerate pistol-whipped radiate dome
a light show of criss cross
kerplunk on a latitude
flagging the battlefield
sending you home

Lesions like caterpillars
mountains not molehills!

Scene 2 –
Finds you alone
clueless in the kitchen
four rings of the cooker blazing
Salvador Dali hands on the clock.
No more idea of how to go about things
no memory of recipe, all cooking has stopped.

An Information / Richard Price

Beyoncé's video-song sequence *Lemonade* is hard-hitting, exhilarating work: her critique of misogyny, father to daughter, husband to wife, runs in queasy parallel with her powerful testament to the still repercutting history of slavery. Her inspired adaptation of the lyric poetry of the London Somali poet **Warsan Shire** in each of the connecting pieces is as powerful as any of the official performances and a reminder of the utter poverty of imagination, the timidity of production values, that dog the conventional poetry infrastructure here (and probably in the States for all I know), not to mention the foolishly haughty relationship 'mainstream' poetry has with 'spoken word'. This is a triumph for Shire, and a deserved one. *Space Gulliver: chronicles of an alien* by **Sampurna Chattarji** (HarperCollins India), *Mz N: the serial* by **Maureen N. McLane** (Farrar Strauss Giroux) each voyage out / in towards sophisticated understandings of the I, with a focus on the unfolding, on the criss-cross between narrative and lyric (and, for McLane, a keen and pleasing sense of Romantic poetry reading us reading it). **Virna Teixeira** continues another kind of journey in *Maternal Instincts* (Carnaval), in Brazilian Portuguese and English translation, where these prose poems reflect: "It's time to rearrange space." The poems of **James McGonigal** in *The Camphill Wren* (Red Squirrel) have a unique combination of wit and human warmth: this is a wonderful selection of his work. Not much point in me saying anything about **Denise Riley's** *Say Something Back* (Picador), she has gone the way of Elbow in becoming that dread entity a national treasure – a long way down the path from her *Marxism for Infants* (1977) and yet a very similar voice to that collection – slightly prickly, heavily cadenced (musical), and just so good at opening ways of thinking. I don't care if you ARE a national treasure! Thank you! Analytical in a different way and, formally, more traditional, is **James Aitchison** whose *Gates of Light* (Mica) finds the poet in fine reflective mode – especially observing social changes over the last seventy or so years.

James Aitchison's latest collection is *The Gates of Light* (Mica Press). His *New Guide to Poetry and Poetics* was published by Rodopi Editions in 2013.

Amy Anderson lives in Aberdeenshire and her first Pamphlet 'Night's Fresh Velvet' was published in 2013.

Hazel Frew's books include *Clockwork Scorpion* (Rack, 2007), *Seahorses* (Shearsman, 2008), *Axis* (Shoestring, 2013), and *Minim* (Rack, 2014).

Dorothy Lehane is the author of *Ephemeris* (Nine Arches Press, 2014), *Places of Articulation* (dancing girl press, 2014) and *Umwelt* (Leafe Press, 2016). She is the founding editor of Litmus Publishing, a press exploring the intersection between science and literature.

Peter McCarey is the author of the study *MacDiarmid and the Russians* and many poetry collections, including *Collected Contraptions* (Carcanet). His collection of essays on poetry, *Find an Angel and Pick a Fight* is published by Molecular Press. He lives in Geneva.

Drew Milne's recent books include 'the view from Royston cave' (2012), 'equipollence' (2012), 'burnt laconics bloom' (2013), and, with John Kinsella, 'Reactor Red Shoes' (2013). His collected poems are forthcoming from Carcanet.

Robin Fulton Macpherson's *A Northern Habitat: Collected Poems* is published by Marick Press.

Richard Price's book of essays *Is this a poem?* is published by Molecular Press. His poetry includes *Small World* (Carcanet, 2012) and *Moon for Sale* (Carcanet, 2017).

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