

Painted, spoken

edited by Richard Price

number 33

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Painted, spoken appears occasionally. If you would like to write reviews or features for the project please contact Richard Price at hydrohotel@hotmail.com

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Editorial

Richard Price

In the last issue, I wondered if, finally, it was time *Painted, spoken* had a web presence. Now the magazine does: paintedspoken.com. The twitter handle is @paintedspoken.

With the new digital space there is more thinking space and other kinds of content can appear more easily. A full-colour visual aspect can be introduced, too. I'm delighted an artist I've long admired, Natalie d'Arbeloff, has allowed me to present her work on the new site in gallery form.

I'm not austere in my tastes, though, for practical reasons, from previous issues of the magazine it might have seemed it. On the contrary, in one of my other lives as a curator-manager in an unusual job in a national library my role has been to embrace the spectrum of approaches -- ideas, publications -- attempting to make sure there is proper representation of all. A little magazine can't do that in the detail -- at an individual level we are each just a knot in a collective net that we both enable and are limited by -- but the new digital space allows me to restate my open-ness to new work and demonstrably expand the range presented.

I'm especially keen to expand the reviewing and features aspect of the magazine. I had wanted to do this anyway, but with the recent closure of Rupert Loydell's *Stride* a serious hole in the poetry infrastructure has appeared. *Painted, spoken* can't hope to fill that, but it will help a little to have a magazine which is

'unaligned' either to the mainstream or the various undergrounds – the dance between self-determination and a collective, outward imagination is a sacred ritual of my creed - and, instead, will attempt a level of seriousness and fun that will bring readers into poetry.

And more than poetry. I would like the magazine to be a wider, cultural review than was possible as a printed zine, taking in art, film, music, theatre, all kinds of culture, really, and politics, with a self-declared but light-touch Left and Green agenda. The project needs articulate thinkers for that and will pay appropriate rates. Contact me if you would like to be more involved in that way: hydrohotel@hotmail.com. And here's to the new era.

C h r i s M c C a b e

Civic's Song

You can never go home, not in the new executive world,
Civic waving at screens waiting for acknowledgement,
his entire form just a shadow in a world of lumens,
who decided he was cast from his nest? What cuckoo king came?
What sooted raven's wing was flung before his birth,
some people just want to give, others need space to think,
and for Civic it's the head's padded cell, with no leaks above,
enough to flex the hare's ear of verse, poetry's thump,
rough ghosts spinning discs where a heart should be,
empty people casting nets & hauling up conundrums,
only the few dredge for ethics, kindness spun on a line,
a silver thing that hooks the bowed pin cushion of a jaw,
then is nothing, flawed reflections in a funny house
where spit & ambition is the everyday squalor of business,
whole weeks spent navigating a risk assessment on how to live,
the probability & severity of each *attempt* to become human,
requesting access to the back of house in public spaces,
green rooms sequestered for VIPs, communes requisitioned by MEPs,
organ donors questioned as smugglers, a world that shakes
for capacity & signage, where there is no middle ground, only edges,
a civilisation of throughways with no interaction, pinch-points
of hesitation, where touch is sacrificed for the blade of a gesture,
relationships ended by app, redundancies enforced by live screen,
personal possessions dumped into loading bays, a white noise
that is ever constant, building to a drone, deafening with bass,
a world where two friends would never walk the same path –
for risk of love's entirety being washed from the earth.

F i o n a L a r k i n

The Taxidermist

death dramatist
meditates
shatters matter

she raids demise
tastes the threads
remixes earth

this mid-air theatre
is theirs is hers
a red art

her edits arrest me
I'm rat hare deer
remade as dream

In response to *The Taxidermist*, Shazea Quraishi

R o b i n F u l t o n M a c p h e r s o n

Norman Cross

Motorway: a thread of silence
I can't stop hearing.
Between two thunderstorms, silence
too loud to sleep through.
Damp shadowy cypresses wait.
They're new memories wanting in.

Wynd

I dreamt that locals took three strides
to cross: I needed a thousand.
It was soon wide as the North Sea,
nowhere for a wall to balance.
On calm days a mere breeze lines up
thin waves to look like city streets
rippling into and out of existence.

Nocturnal

Pine, birch and aspen that don't exist
hiss in a breeze that doesn't exist.

In a deep sleep, under a surface
I hear them when I dream I'm awake.

Tinnitus that never stops, has stopped,
lets me hear silence that isn't there.

Never as Expected

The islands are floating.
The trees are cast-iron.
As on a grey Whitsun

the rocks have no language.
The globe leans towards night.
Night contains no darkness.

Graveyard in the Sun

Time now to tidy up graves.
There are withered wreaths to dump.
Now wavers as a grass-blade
wavers on a windless day.

Sycamore and ash seed-wings
trampled into graveyard paths
have no future to recall,
no past to look forward to.

'No matter what I happened to hear'

April Yee reviews Lee Hyemi and Ito Hiromi

Migration is often mediated through water: boats thrashed by waves, planes hurtling above the sea. In literature, the act of migration – that is, breaking off original relationships and creating new ones – is often portrayed as a rebirth: *la mer* is *la mère*. The self becomes new by moving through liquid. That migration can traverse national borders or the line between one person and another. In an untitled prologue to *Unexpected Vanilla* (trans. from Korean by So J. Lee), Lee Hyemi writes:

*There is always an exchange of fluids
at the critical moment when a relationship deepens.
Holding the fish jar in which alphabets swim
I step into the world of the second person.*

This fluidity saturates *Unexpected Vanilla* and another recent poetry release from Tilted Axis Press, Ito Hiromi's dual collection *Killing Kanoko / Wild Grass on the Riverbank* (whose translations from Japanese by Jeffrey Angles were first separately published in the US in 2009 and 2014). Liquid images are echoed by liquid forms; Lee and Ito's work drips down some pages in lines while filling up others with text.

Selections from *Killing Kanoko* read like *zuihitsu*, the Japanese form that floats between essay and poetry, often more staccato and stream-of-consciousness than the lyric essay. It is a meditation rather than an argument. The Japanese courtier Sei Shōnagon pioneered the form with *The Pillow Book*, a series of lists and musings on quotidian life that was completed in the year 1002. Today the American poet Kimiko Hahn maintains the *zuihitsu* tradition in English. 'I like to think of the *zuihitsu* as a fungus—not plant or animal, but a species unto itself,' Hahn said in an interview with

BOMB Magazine. It is marked, she said, by ‘a kind of randomness that is not really random, but a feeling of randomness; a pointed subjectivity that we don’t normally associate with the essay.’ In the Tilted Axis publications, zuihitsu’s distance from the essay or even the prose poem is signposted by the typesetting; strings of words run continuously across more than 25 lines, with the first line on the margin and subsequent ones indented. By following the printing conventions of poetry (while other English-language zuihitsu tends to follow prose formatting), Tilted Axis emphasises zuihitsu’s unique ‘fungus’ quality. One example is *Killing Kanoko*’s ‘On Ç’:

My mother. My mother’s older sister. My mother’s younger sisters. My grandmother. The sound remains among the women on my mother’s side. My grandmother who died at eighty, my mother’s older sister at sixty, my mother’s younger sisters at fifty. The sound is the rasping of their conversations on my ears as they sat and conversed while I, the youngest, sat among them. They said it often. It felt like it was rasping, but the fact I could feel it at all meant I could distinguish it from other sounds.

The poem’s surface subject – a sound rendered foreign on the page by the Ç’s cedilla – is a meditation on speech and matrilineal inheritance, how secrets are whispered by generations of women who have preserved the art of pronouncing a particular phoneme. The speaker is seen, small, among her elders, simultaneously an outsider and an insider to her relatives’ language. Ito departs from this diaristic mode to consider the Ç itself:

The sound of choking back breath in your throat also had a meaning: “to stand up.” The softly voiced nasal sound had a meaning: “to want to touch.” The sound of lips quivering like the buzz of an insect had a meaning: “goldenrod.” The sound of teeth rubbing together: “nerves.” The sound of breath leaking through a half-opened

mouth: “night,” “gods,” “darkness.”

As the speaker deconstructs Ç’s meanings, the structure of the writing also loosens from fully formed sentences to incomplete ones. The repetition of the word ‘sound’ echoes the speaker’s efforts to say ‘Ç.’ Definitions shift from the empowered and embodied (‘to stand up,’ ‘to want to touch’) to the inactive and abstract (‘gods,’ ‘darkness’). Even the word ‘nerves’ does not remain stable in meaning: in the context of grinding teeth, it connotes stress and pain, but in another context – say, facing the night or the gods – nerve might be a useful weapon. The varied and shifting meanings of ‘Ç’ are like the stories and genetic material passed from grandmothers to mothers to daughters: sometimes a gift, sometimes a burden, sometimes both.

*

Lee lays out the themes of *Unexpected Vanilla* in ‘Summer, When Loquats Light Up,’ a prose poem in stanzas: physicality and sexuality, the human and the inhuman, fluid and fruit.

Let’s walk with our fingers laced when the loquats arrive. Wet trees permeating between each finger. When we become jumbled branches with all the yellow we have, our touching palms become the world’s ripped interior. A tree begins when you break the berry and wet some other flesh. That’s why people who’ve put their palm lines together travel inside the same dream.

These lines serve as an antechamber for the collection, which dwells in the speaker’s perceptions of nature, relationships, and herself. Ties between people, like ‘trees permeating between each finger,’ are both as supple and fragile as plant life. The people in these relationships become flora themselves, ‘jumbled branches with all the yellow we

have.’ The image of people holding hands as travellers ‘inside the same dream’ acts as an invitation to the reader to enter Lee’s fantasy. Like the loquat, that dream holds the promise of both sweetness and tartness; lovers walk with ‘touching palms’ in a world that is ‘ripped.’

Humans become plants and plants become human in both Lee and Ito’s worlds. Nature is an active participant rather than mere setting or object. In Lee’s single-block prose poem ‘Erasable Seeds,’ a speaker’s body is taken over by fruit:

Tonight I’ve curled up with a grape in my mouth. With black liquids overflowing from a dream, the gap sheds its tender skin and sinks deep into the earth. Even as the seeds I swallowed without chewing have suffused my bones, transplanting my blood vessels with tiny roots. A plant’s quilt, weaving roots long and thin. When I understand trees and cradle my bones, my skin disappears and my body melts in many directions.

The speaker’s body is replaced by the plant’s, with ‘White tree bark protruding from a scraped knee.’ These plants and the relationships between them, with their branching roots and cycles of death and growth, serve as metaphors for humans and human relationships. Like people, plants communicate and live in symbiotic or parasitic states with others. In Ito’s ‘On the riverbank,’ part of the novella-in-verse *Wild Grass on the Riverbank*,

the rushes let out a sigh and started acting as if they realised what they had done, meanwhile, they stuck out their tongues and licked out blood from their leaves, the kudzu vines crawled up the slopes of the embankment, they grew as far as the path on top of the embankment, they groped about as random, they touched us too, sometimes they could not completely control their lust and let out a stifled little laugh

Ito's plants bleed, lick, and grope, while experiencing human feelings in sighs, 'lust,' and acts of realising 'what they've done.' The humans in the poem are subject to the will of the rushes and kudzu vines, a reversal of American and Japanese narratives in which humans invent technology in order to control nature and its surprises. Later, in 'Abandonment,' Ito writes: 'Let's grind your dried-up umbilical cords into dust and throw them away.' Humans and human relationships are destroyed and dispersed back into nature, an appropriate image for a novella based on a real news story about children left to fend for themselves amid parental neglect.

Wild Grass marked a change in Ito's writing, one catalysed by her move to the arid wasteland of California, Angles writes in a translator's statement: 'Her already prodigious output of essays increased, and she began writing novellas. When asked about this shift, she typically mentioned it was because she was tired of the strictures of poetry and because she felt prose was better suited to exploring her new experiences as an immigrant.' Writing in a new genre is like learning in a new language, with different mental associations and musical rhythms. This difficulty with language is expressed in the text through words transliterated from English to Japanese (a father cursing 'Damu itto, damu itto' in 'We live in the wasteland'). Through the unorthodox spelling, the foreignness of *damn it* is maintained even for the anglophone reader. The novella, comprising poems narrated by a child, presents a funhouse universe in which an immigrant wonders why the place she's come to can't adapt to her, rather than the reverse – as is often expected or enforced. 'Why do we come places where no one understands us?' the child asks in 'Mother leads us on board.' Confronting this gap between what is understood and misunderstood raises questions about the value of language itself. Ito writes about the child carrying a leech-like creature on her back and trying to communicate with it in 'I am':

the meanings of all the words I say just slide over the slippery surface of the intention of what I am trying to convey, or perhaps they are absorbed directly into the intention, I don't know what to say, but the leech-child's desire to know conveys itself to me, and I respond with language, I don't know if this is good or not, but all I have is language, the only way I have to respond is language, all I have is language, I respond with language, I respond

Meanings, like the leech, are 'slippery' and perhaps also malicious. Anaphora ('I respond') emphasises the neverending and tiring nature of communication, an effort undertaken because 'all I have is language.' The poem addresses the larger project of poetry and the utility of a writer's work if it can never fully convey what she wants. Elsewhere in the novella, the child watches her mother, a poet who is a stand-in for Ito, at poetry events in which unintelligible phrases are exchanged between the poet and her audience.

Story is one way Ito seeks to bridge that gap of meaning. *Wild Grass*, Angles writes, is a rare example of longform narrative poetry in Japanese: 'Whereas English-language poetry has a rich tradition of long, narrative poems by canonical authors, very few modern Japanese poets have attempted narrative poetry on such a large scale.' *Wild Grass* is set up by the final poem in *Killing Kanoko*, the desperate monologue of a girl abused by her father. Even while trafficking in fantastical images – a talking demon, a buried baby that stays alive by drinking through a straw for three years – 'I am Anjuhimeko' infuses itself with reality by commenting on the framework of narrative itself:

In stories, it seems to me the person they refer to as father usually wasn't around or was absence itself, no matter what story I happened to hear, the person called father would be dead in the house or out somewhere traveling or listening to whatever the stepmother was telling him to do, but in my house, there is someone called father, and he is intent on killing me

Phrases such as ‘the person they refer to as father’ and ‘the person called father’ underline the fact that people are cast into predetermined roles perpetuated through tales. This bleak statement on the inevitable crumminess of human relations primes the reader to meet the vibrant plant characters of *Wild Grass*, whose names have been translated to maintain a surface appearance to human ones. The child, after following the mother to America and being subjected to living with her mother’s dead, smelly lovers, returns to Japan and meets the empowered grasses of the riverbank. The grasses feed on corpses left on the bank, reincorporating them into the land, a final repatriation.

P e t e r M c C a r e y

from **The Syllabary**

15.9.20 **Is That a Fact?**

'Facts are chiel that winna ding
An downa be disputed'. One:
A fact is not a chiel (and that's a fact).
Two: look out that window: point to a fact.
Four: that which cannot be disputed
Must be passed over in silence.

15.9.19 **Ginger and Fred**

A chin to chuck
A cheek to peck
Tongue in cheek
To cheek.

15.7.19

The pegs on the sarangi stand
Like pieces on a chessboard. Check
Ram Narayan.

15.7.3

The chep
Is the sole
Of the turn-wrest plow:
A moment's
Rest, a roadstead.

16.7.3 **Jeopardy**

I am the good leopard,
Peppered with spots.
The shepherd has salted away
His flocks.

16.7.20 **Solomon Grundy**

Seed
Cell
Shell
Shard.

16.6.20

The shrill of frost
Under my boots
That crush the moonlight.

16.5.20 **Mirror Fugue**

Fall yellow shall bellow
Mal billow will mellow
Bill willow pill
Shallow bell fellow
Mell pillow fell
Mallow
Yell follow.

Fall
Yellow mal
Fellow pill mellow fell.
Bellow:
Shall pillow
(Will bellow)
Mell willow?
Bill mallow
Bell shallow
Yell follow

16.5.1

Shah is a Persian cat.
Schwa is vanity without a van,
The echo of emptiness.

16.8.1 **Ché/chez**

Shay should be either
Home or revolution.
It's a radical chic café
Built from genuine
Intifadic
Ammunition.

16-8-3 **Mezcala**

Shape
A pebble
The burn fumbled.
Shape the break
Of light on its cheekbones
And the look on a face that sees it
Far from now.

Pete Astor

How to Fall in Love

gaze into the eyes of Bobbi Venus
as the pitted tape turns
 then ask her if she knows you're there
make better work
 of the way the dark-haired woman swooned
 in her new-build
 on a legendary morning
untangle the cartoon villains
 telling stories about what happened
 and the endless in-betweens
go back and join your two hands
 across the useless pile of photographs
 that are never going to save you
hide in the near future
 when the world shuts down
 get in the car and come back ten years later
go back over your ridiculous notebooks
 find all the evidence
 read it out loud
 and pay attention this time

An A to Z of Faith

acting in a way that loses the mess
breaking the old patterns
changing nothing that's gone
drowning in joy as someone
easy in understanding
falling once and for all
going simply to nearby water
holy this time
in grace and held by
just you
knowing you are underway
leaving but staying
making up worlds
negotiating our divinities
one prayer at a time
pacing the temple
questions falling away
resting in grace
soul packed in supermarket ice
tempted forever
under the law of the human heart
version of god
world of devotion
x rays of my insides
yes to belief
zodiacs too

New Religion

find an organisation
parse its mission statements
angle your body
against its glass headquarters
dance your way
to a place of safety
carry your cardboard box
to a room in the forest
be a god in your new country
replay the black film
with the jittering single hair
and the voice in a slow language
now follow the man
with the name you cannot say
to the ending you always wanted
take the single decker bus
across the early town
open your book of humans
sit by the ancient building
and sing

Anita on a Plane in 1958

on cartoon clouds above tomorrow
 bumping to completion
 the kind company manager
 a spirit at your side

put on a particular mission
 your worth recognised
 using your second sight
 to resolve a situation

as the festival of your country
 made houses on the moon
 rehearsing a new tomorrow
 of how to make and do

flying above the weather
 multilingual and just so
 doing important work
 in many modern languages

now neat wooden pieces
 of new modular furniture
 slip together at your home
 ready for the new

and meanings,
leaves the room
and time returns to its normal pace,
a floor of vinegar on its way to a greasy pole.

My ideas have their own ideas. It's been like this for a long time. Since I lost my heart, shredded by a machine that makes days without remorse or consideration for the frailties that invented crystals and verses. My tongue is covered with moss and rage, I have a coin in my pocket and I don't phone heaven or the sea. I keep having women but only outside my eyes. I dream of killing time and I fall backwards on the edge of the precipice of all contingencies. I eat. I eat myself.

Alone with the stars without light or still so distant that it only illuminates the past. There must be a verb for this. I ignore it. I don't remember it. Today is a feast day. Feast of Saint Michael of the Disorientation. The Devil shows his face in the slumber of children and in the false simplicity of fruits. My ideas prevent me from being present. Today of all days when I so wanted to dance life away inside a wine bowl.

K i r s t e n I r v i n g

Belting, circa the Kuiper Belt

after A Home in Space by Edwin Morgan

Lying still in space is one thing, but to do so
so as to let your crewmate's arm swing up,
up and down with any decent force
forces a body to get creative –
creative as the teams who built this can.
Can we still be heard at ground control?
Controlling the scope and strike is one thing.
Thing is, when the leather bites my behind,
behind the monitors, they might worry.
Worry the shrieks mean you're space-bats, killing me –
me, the navigator (as if you'd be so,
so stupid as to strand yourself) – or that
that glance we shared as we buckled in
in Houston had become a full-on yes,
yes, mission-tanking marathon of banging.
Banging my head on the bunk as I buck,
buck beneath the swish and crack, I feel the thick red –
reddening with every whack – stripes rising,
rising like moons on the moons of my cheeks.
Cheeks ablaze, you break for air and peer,
peer sagely into the scanner. We are passing it now.
Now it is passing us – this ring of methane, ammonia, water.
Water? No, thank you. Onward, past what?
What might be described as a glorious,
glorious galactic fart. You take a few pictures for work,
work the buckle tooth this way and that.
That's a big deal, I guess. That's the reason we're here.
Here, I mumble from my prison pillow. I think they might be fading.
Fading? Kuiper, the volatiles? My butt-marks, I correct you.
Correct, you growl and grin. *Get back in position.*

Fiona Templeton and *Mum in Airdrie*

Sketches of Poets by Richard Price

Fiona Templeton's poetry places individual words under considerable linguistic pressure, the poems proceeding in fragments but with a kind of patterning which propels the whole and gives a kind of organic, rivery, movement. Templeton, co-founder of Theatre of Mistakes, works from an experimental performance background; one way of finding a path through her work is to see it as score-related, its effects being as musical, or sonic, as they are straightforwardly semantic. There is a feeling of eddy after eddy in her poetry, sometimes caught up with language play and elusive allusion and which to (to this reader) feels improvisational at the point of detail while being contained or formed by larger more fixed structures.

Here is an extract from *Mum in Airdrie* (Object Permanence, 2005):

fake a day a do down die
service spending
in gusts
hemphill coxhill love on a hill
smell
myself
two day pump die
necessary spending
two of us knives

gorgeous disguise
upending our ownlessness
arms in hand
zero me in fill

what knives
by
cream deputy
quick
hour luxurious monster
felt that
no this thing
a voice
lying out

ater
is right here gassing
guilt away
idead [...]

This is from the opening of the first of the two sections – the first is dated December 1997. The dedication tells us Norah Monaghan Templeton died in December 1998. The second is dated December 1998, apparently following close after the death.

It is inconceivable that this poem could have been published by any of the larger UK presses, back in 2005 or now. I find it poignant that a poem which finds and gives a different language to reflection on a mother-daughter relationship should have such a precarious existence, as if one of the most important human relationships there is should be quietly reduced by the spectrum of the poetry world itself.

Instead, a small press based in Glasgow, Object Permanence (the poet Peter Manson and the lecturer Robin Purves) published this book, distributing it by mail order. The press grew out of the 1990s little magazine of the same name, an enterprise I'd characterise as publishing English, Scottish and American poetry with various experimental approaches.

What is to be made of this poem? In the extract above there is a floating, mercurial quality that makes *placing* the poem difficult (a striking contrast to the simplicity of its title) – what stability of meaning there is at the hinge of the written and the aural, and it is always on the move.

The phrase "fake a day do down day" sounds like the rousing sound-filler in a ballad – perhaps it's only me, but I think especially of the refrain in "Whiskey in the Jar" – "Musha ring dumb a do dumb a da / Whack [or Wait] for my daddy-o / Whack [or Wait] my daddy-o / There's whiskey in the jar-o". Closer scrutiny suggests the phrase is not nonsense but a kind of compression – this is a "fake", a counterfeit, day because, as we learn, the poet's mother (my reading makes this pointedly not 'daddy') appears to be terminally ill and can't do what she would do in full health. There is also here a sense of slow medical time, the

depressing sense of a “down day”. While this contrasts with the fast and rising use of a refrain like that in “Whiskey in the Jar” – we are surely in decelerating or ‘heavied’ time now – it does introduce the idea that *Mum in Airdrie* is itself a kind of ballad, an aural story-song of a kind. This story-song will have the jarring modernities of lines like “service spending” which glimpse at the contextual economics of healthcare.

Already, in just one line, the reader is experiencing an incredibly rich kind of poetry, a poetry which cannot accept the transactional simplicities of so much poetry familiar to readers of the mainstream. This is counterintuitive in a way – the lines are so short, brittle even, there are no explanations, or at least none laid out politely. It is also a poetry which mixes the known with the uncertain – no reader can ‘know’ this work in the way that no reader can know a layered piece of lyric music, simply because knowing is not the only way of perceiving (in day to day life we in fact could not survive if we had to stop to know everything we perceived, but we do perceive the rhythm and pattern of our way through our own existence).

At once a lurchy, gothically emotional poetry – “in gusts” – this is also an allusive poetry, terse, a shape-shifter. Hemphill – is it the Ayrshire location?, the Scottish surname, specifically, the writer and comedian Greg Hemphill? The poem doesn’t tell us, suggesting to me – again file under ‘perhaps’ and don’t worry about it yet – a word whose meaning is primarily understood by mother and daughter (and this may be its primary meaning for the reader, simply that mother and daughter have in their intimacy of understanding their own shared exclusivities).

Then quickly the poem uses ‘hill’ to pivot to Coxhill. This is surely Lol Coxhill the improvisatory saxophonist who has worked with various figures of the Anglophone poetry avant-garde and I imagine Templeton herself. In that little leap, we find a shift from the home-ness of the Scottish locale and/or surname / family shibboleth of Hemphill to the self-conscious international artist that the poet is, each nexus perhaps a kind of “love on a hill”, and perhaps love (where profound enthusiasm is a bleary mixture of election

and compulsion) is the way that these very two different worlds can be bridged.

In fact the array of techniques used in this modest sounding poem – *Mum* not *Mother* in small town Airdrie – is so various that I can't give justice to it here (but look for instance at the words which seem to be sawn-off ("ater" for "later"?) or reconstituted ("idead" makes a verb in the past tense of having an idea (idea'd) or even having an idea done to you (the energy of a great conversation "gassing")), but – I dead - is also a premonition of self-mortality, never far away in elegy for another; by chance, predating the technology of course, it also reads as premonition - a swipe at all things 'i-', e.g. the iPad, an iDead if ever there was one)). This intensity of play *and* its bonding with emotional, weighty themes, continues in the second section:

my angle heathen
and don't unsay
for if he ever
gainsay headsay
frem wrist writing
like a froth
drop
stopped in use
belie heaven belly believing
become
all good bad
she cubed
a good eyed
a birthbelong

What, the reader may well ask, is this work doing to the conception of language and poetry itself? For me it seems to be getting closer to poetry as an analogue for full-language consciousness, a kind of on-the-move intricate, song-text-of-different-densities-and-velocities, which, despite proceeding in a way that means immediate coherence is only fleeting (though often touching, funny, and/or satirical), gradually, embracing both the abstract and the personal, builds to an extraordinarily rich score.

An Information

Veritas: Poems after Artemisia by **Jacqueline Saphra**, with an introduction by Jordana Pomeroy and afterword by the author (Hercules Editions). There are so many doors this beautifully produced book opens: the paintings of the seventeenth century artist Artemisia Gentileschi feelingly and expertly commented upon by Saphra via the poems and her afterword; the implied struggles and achievements of women then and now; the sheer artistry of the poems and the architecture of the final sonnet, containing a line from each of the preceding ones, bringing the crown of sonnets together; the handsomely reproduced paintings themselves; and the art historical context accessibly introduced by Jordana Pomeroy. "She grinds her colours, escapes an age of limits" – what a brilliant line, summarising the labour and the talent, and that leap up: it captures the energy and achievement of this book.

The Nine Mothers of Heimdallr by **Miriam Nash**, again from Hercules, also has clear feminist concerns and is as lovingly produced in poetry, context (by authority Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir), and image. Nash has gone back behind the better-known Norse gods such as Thor and Odin to their Titan-like female predecessors, creating a ballad of female community and power which is part creation myth, part tragedy, even part lullaby. Female presence is strong but even so love proves fluid and so gender does. The poem is as intimate as a parent gently explaining a child's back history to them, using shapes in the fire to 'see' the characters, a key metaphor for the imagination. It is implied that the child has heard this tale before, so there is the affection of a knowingly shared experience. The poem is also as heroic as a bard explaining it to an audience in a large hall, and creation myths are woven in to what becomes, beneath a deceptively simple approach, a poem layered with complexities of different kinds of distance, tonally and technically: recovery of far-off female gods, recovery of peace in a war-obsessed world, recovery of reliable privacy in a world of public 'heroics'. In a touch entirely in keeping with the theme, warm, textured fabric-

pictures are provided by Nash's mother the artist Christina Edlund-Plater and mother and daughter interview each other in a feature at the end.

Though their approach is almost diametric, Hercules Editions are particularly good at the City Lights style handleable format of the book and both these books are in that form (City Lights 'go on their nerve' in O'Hara's phrase, beat-style – Hercules are careful, researched, formally traditional – both, in their own ways, are beautiful and contemporary to their time). These really are books that will fit easily in a pocket or handbag. So handsome are they rendered, one would not want them to languish there for long: when cafes, pubs, and public transport are safe again, they are for reading very publicly.

Contributors **Pete Astor** led The Loft and The Weather Prophets and has continued to make and release music under a variety of guises on labels including Matador, Heavenly, Warp, Fortuna Pop, Tapete and his own Faux-Lux label. He is Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Westminster, and has written a study of Richard Hell for Bloomsbury's 33/3rd series. In his most recent work he joins his musical and poetry worlds together in spoken word as The Attendant. **Kirsten Irving** is a poet, editor and voice actor based in London. She co-runs Sidekick Books with Jon Stone, and has edited more than ten anthologies. Her own work has been widely anthologised, published by Happenstance and Salt, and thrown out of a helicopter. She loves crows, robots and crowbots. **Fiona Larkin's** debut pamphlet, *A Dovetail of Breath*, was published by Rack Press in 2020. Her poem 'Rope of Sand' was highly commended in the Forward Prizes 2019. She manages innovative poetry events with Corrupted Poetry. **Chris McCabe's** work crosses artforms and genres including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama and visual art. His work has been shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award and the Republic of Consciousness Prize. His most recent collection is *The Triumph of Cancer* (2018), which is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, and his most recent novel is *Mud* (2019), a version of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, set beneath Hampstead Heath. He is the editor of *Poems from the Edge of Extinction: An Anthology of Poetry in Endangered Languages* (2019) and *No, Love is Not Dead: An Anthology of Love Poetry from Around the World* (2021). **Robin Fulton Macpherson's** *Northern Habitat: Collected Poems 1960-2010* is published by Marick Press. See Alan Riach's account of Macpherson's remarkable work here: www.thebottleimp.org.uk/2018/12/a-northern-habitat-collected-poems-1960-2010-by-robin-fulton-macpherson/ **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, as is *Petrushka*, a hybrid novel which, written before Covid19, is a shocking prophecy of a pandemic. He lives in Geneva. **Miguel Martins** is the author of many poetry collections and has been translated widely. He is also a translator of poetry and fiction, a lyricist and an improvisational musician (see the album *Dada Dandy — A Favola da Medusa*, featuring George Haslam, Slam Records, 2014). **Richard Price's** latest collection is *Moon for Sale* (Carcanet). His reflections on lyric poetry, artists' books, and small presses are collected in *Is This A Poem?* (Molecular Press). **April Yee** writes about colonialism, climate change, and other effects of power. In 2020 her work was commended or shortlisted by *Ambit*, Live Canon, and the Bridport Prize. She reported in more than a dozen countries before moving to London, where she serves on the Refugee Journalism Project at UAL and tweets @aprilyee.

Painted, spoken

Pete Astor
Kirsten Irving
Fiona Larkin
Chris McCabe
Peter McCarey
Robin Fulton Macpherson
Miguel Martins

April Yee on Lee Hyemi and Ito Hiromi

Richard Price on Fiona Templeton, Miriam
Nash and Jacqueline Saphra

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