

## Go Figure

'So much for the plain sung champagne moment . . .'

Drew Milne was born in Edinburgh, Scotland 1964. His books of poetry include *Sheet Mettle* (Alfred David, 1994), *Bench Marks* (Alfred David, 1998), *The Damage: new and selected poems* (Salt, 2001) and *Mars Disarmed* (The Figures, 2002). His poetry has been featured in *Conductors of Chaos*, ed. Iain Sinclair (Picador, 1996) and *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*, ed. Keith Tuma (Oxford University Press, 2001). In 1995 he was writer in residence at the Tate Gallery, London, and since 1997 he has been the Judith E. Wilson Lecturer in Drama and Poetry, University of Cambridge and a fellow of Trinity Hall. He co-edited *Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader* (Blackwell, 1996) with Terry Eagleton, and has recently edited the anthology *Modern Critical Thought* (Blackwell, 2003). For further information: <<http://drewmilne.tripod.com>>.

Also by Drew Milne:

*Satyrs and Mephitic Angels* (Cambridge: Equipage, 1993)

*Sheet Mettle* (London: Alfred David Editions, 1994)

*How Peace Came* (Cambridge: Equipage, 1994)

*Carte Blanche* (Kenilworth: Prest Roots Press, 1996)

*Songbook* (Kirkcaldy: Akros, 1996)

*Bench Marks* (London: Alfred David Editions, 1998)

*As It Were* (Cambridge: Equipage, 1998)

*familiars* (Cambridge: Equipage, 1999)

*Pianola*, with Jo Milne (Cambridge: REM Press, 2000)

*The Gates of Gaza* (Cambridge: Equipage, 2001)

*The Damage: New and Selected Poems* (Cambridge: Salt 2001)

*Mars Disarmed* (Barrington, M.A.: The Figures, 2002)

As editor:

*Modern Critical Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003)

*Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader*, with Terry Eagleton  
(Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

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PUBLISHED BY SALT PUBLISHING  
PO Box 937, Great Wilbraham, Cambridge PDO CB1 5JX United Kingdom  
PO Box 202, Applecross, Western Australia 6153

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First published 2003

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Lightning Source

Typeset in Swift 9.5 / 13

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ISBN 1 84471 029 7 paperback

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

*This book is dedicated, with love, to Mary Milne*



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## Acknowledgments

Versions of poems from this book have appeared or are forthcoming in the following journals and collections: *The Alterran Poetry Assemblage*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Fast*, *Jacket*, *Masthead*, *Poetry International*, *Prague Literary Review*, *Quid*, *Van Gogh's Ear*, and *Works on Paper*. Many thanks to the editors concerned. Thanks also to a number of people who were in on the making of individual poems, however inadvertently, especially Natalie Abrahami, Richard Baker, Miles Champion, Linda Clarke, Mark Currie, Stacy Doris, Elizabeth Edwards, Andrew James, Simon Jarvis, Linda Karshan, James Montgomery, Will Montgomery, Jeremy Morris, Peter Nicholls, Rachel Potter, Tom Raworth, Brian Kim Stefans and John Wilkinson. The poem beginning 'White walls bleeding . . .' is dedicated to the memory of Sorley Macdonald. Special thanks to Chris Hamilton-Emery for his labours and for his encouragement.



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'Solon used to say that men who surrounded tyrants  
were like the pebbles used in calculations.'

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

'When shall we have men of a universal spirit?'

OLIVER CROMWELL

'Without him Caesar would have stood alone . . .  
He's the universal soldier and he really is to blame . . .'

BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE

'I have never reached the true centre, where art is pure politics.'

TOM RAWORTH



*For every blemish of determinate song  
come fallen drifts upon untold bitters  
and shall be some equal and opposing  
with the infinite sadness of families  
carrying the dead by them so lightly*

*here a fear, there a broken down promise  
as if some law of excluded middles  
disproves the early bucket of the just  
and callous digits ill at these numbers  
now fall breaking in upon hostage news*

This imperium's eagle spreads ancient wings  
as the saying goes ahem friends Romans  
and globalists most dextrous ego-surfers  
of the remotest control say go figure  
let slip the bristling clusters and gas  
from each harsh Doric column stabbed long  
and hard into a ruin of sea and dimpled air  
most cleaving indifference over physical  
features that depict no political borders  
all the solids gone the way of amalgam  
lost upon spicy chicken wings as claws  
do special resolutions in pink cartoons  
nails down tankers the chalk on board thing  
and the gas is all for oil, galley slave  
of this grade class fellow-guzzling petrol  
and not to bury Caesar or mock his father  
but stacks of cheap beer waiting to party  
till even a spangle-toed smoke akimbo  
can't fully wipe the thought of a pretzel  
turned t.v. assassin exploding Cubans  
spread far across the axis of nonsense  
a.k.a. the death squads of those with most  
squeezing the life out of those with nothing  
the words bang to hearts turning real hard  
so scream now or forever hold up paws  
for the cut chaser doing that's all folks  
still counting on meltdowns to explosion  
on the ghosted spread-sheets of Halifax  
the embrace as plausible as a love train  
of leaf-peepers off to blushing Vermont  
so much chasing after reddening glory  
and the little matter of chemical yarns

Onward to the contrary it is  
syntax troop motions  
standing orders in a phalanx  
tipping the remainders  
and small lips calling revenge  
be prim with the primer  
come distant and knitted brows  
then autumn folds take  
to scupper the jokingly warped  
azure scale of the trait  
but hardly illumined by same  
faked to a sad choker  
with a grammar of solidarity  
under an aegis of nouns  
bled to stable bit and foam and  
then sacrificed, frankly  
further to the up and coming  
for which thorny witness  
read in the obvious fresh aura  
such that flushing roots  
spread their exponential terror  
right up on schematism  
and each interrogative chamber  
scrubbed and sleeping  
among good but tortured doves

Sort codes move on slaying in costive eyes  
thou stock and spool thinned out to drapery

and well shook tracings in name or crumble  
while a saving trace is put down to salt

how over much as much that wanton draws  
parchment turns on carbon till pages fray

hardly raging as they lay claim to fields  
then spreads for the pulp of leaving parties

down through nibbles and a short trivium  
chipped and spun to gossip, food and t.v.

Swiftly on the hook of x  
the opponent of the latter  
falls just as opus grudges  
crack up fractions of day

cast off and left for knives  
as in plaster or patter fire  
no tomorrow and coming  
so soon comes to nought

blonde or gone as around  
it pleases all the sack log  
and still plangent parade  
as the call to an executed

summary not what least  
throws beauty off the tick  
tongue to wag ooh so not  
and come off it says next

How so ever but through equilibrium  
lost then turned to a fabulous scalpel

where the converse applies to the ratio  
for instance a callous rocked to edges

or feed tending to scale up calmer ties  
so wrapped around an attention scaffold

that to you is gurgle and burnt hotpants  
a beach of bruised pleasure going too far

beyond pavilions and the setting rain  
who is not ground out nor come together

What bias fixed  
or how passed  
in liquid aether

thy coop active  
lo wise lobe or  
obsequious orb

among ministers  
and right weary  
fair image of the

flood of bounty  
said the ferment  
said ruined deep

After ether pitch packets  
skipping who stiffs our  
deftest finger that tantara  
mildly period niche eek-eek  
sunk through lived-in stroke  
as for swishest things  
flung dribbles then swill  
then mmm pout liner  
cushions the whirling streak  
party beast peaking peaked  
oh just meringue dusted  
for dazzle dubbed poppy  
now doing what stalks  
porosity from bends proper  
shouting glory glory blunder