

AIR FRESHENERS FOR THE SOUL

for and from Peter Finch*

'My father said poems were
things you used when you died
air fresheners for the eternal soul'

– Peter Finch, 'Now You Can Again Be Your Father'

At one time anarchism in the fields,
mumbled at: a history is being re-lived.

•

We crossed the mountains, she entered
the room with ease. The smell of history
is a combination of individual energies;
most of it memory, blue selves dancing.

•

It was the length of grass, six sodium moons,
long tomes, chirping; God's soldier on water.

•

Out here on the airwaves we hear flickers.
In the committee room they were cold.
What do they call it? We'll think of God
advancing noiselessly on roads, grenade
in the throwing hand. Do not run.

•

Do it again, then you'll know anyone'll
do anything. You should not know and
should not ask what else you can write.
Who can be a reader? I used to think
about it. Magnetism is a charm, not
open throat speech. Silence. Silence.

•

Here are a few lost weekends,
motives and desires from laughter.
Dross becomes less accomplished,
one hand on the wallpaper, the other

persistently shapes his material.

•

All this snow'll keep the poets busy
for months: text in a shaky scrawl.
Clap a lot but you can't push him in
as the excrement breaks above
the river on farmer's hillsides.

•

Remember this at the lectern:
throw the voice, finger the bell
of the ear. And the breath came
and the breath went. You want
the Lord smashed? Meet yourself.

•

From my room you can't scrap
the bigheaded wrought-iron
arse pole. It is autumn and the
painter drizzles at the bike sheds.
I trowel the tear flat, can do this
with any blue sounds, doppler crack
and spill. In the huge car park
his white room, no Latin plants,
bloody Nora unwound like
a conceit, writing so fast, all
spring rattle squalls scattered.

•

3 days of rain, step edge mend
fading in the bar. We should be able
to make a poem out of thermostat
clicks, rain crackles, bracken burning.
Poets disagreed, learning too late
about talking diffused into its
surroundings, half a voice in
the distance, like buddleia roots.

•

Must be a decade without half
of them, dot matrix blur in sunlight,

unpacked slowly. Got through
these things, watch television clatter,
dust on the stylus. He seems to think
that the street rucks up in the straight,
afternoon rain: shadow parallelogram,
flaked lintel, drill clanking. I can do this.

•

You start by listening. These telegrams
are matters of urgency, asked a lot
about the echo here. Hum what you can.

The legends and excuses inside his jeans.
The fan spinning above, in the index
between bright eyes and writing it down.

•

Maximum capacity at the edge of a square lake.

•

Obvious parallels here with coming home
down the alleyway. Measurable risk.
The slow single whip brightens their eyes.

•

People are always the ones in front this spring.
It is a day when it rains. I'm not a gardener,
gave up, startled by a crash. We speak
the language: the wind comes in off the sea,
halfway to the summit and it starts to rain.

•

You see them ride boxcars.

Why should I say more?

•

The avant garde is finished, the revolutions
are no longer exciting, there are skinheads
in every ruined youth, infinite numbers.

At the bottom of the cupboard, no one
had cleared the yard. Tomorrow, abuse
in this verbal wilderness, rejection.

•

The rateable values didn't have enough
energy to inspect our own drained flatland,
couldn't name one Dutch friend. Outside
the bookshop, illusions, pain, health.
He spent his time watching ghosts,
did sit-ups to keep his body trim. Just
an ordinary man of immigrant slate.

•

Hear all this through your Walkman,
say these words from actual headlines:
green lane national park wave my arms.

•

Opposing forces confront each other
in the country side. A is a hat, B is
nothing definite. I need not remind you
how Welsh you feel when the clouds
bump together in the corner. History
becomes poetry, watching these makes
me wonder why, learn to be wonderful.
The other poem is always the better one.

•

How does the poet organise his time?
Repairing the lawn mower, making jokes,
exploding secrets in ceaseless motion.

•

Mathematical talent often develops at
an early age. Pimples. Human beings
are alone in facing these problems,
the modern is inevitable. Dismantled.

•

Action of antibodies against snake venom

is simple. In one version the woman with blonde hair has to be helped from the car. In the writer's class it is a matter of echoes: once put down on paper never changed.

•

Warps of the heart when I form a fist.
You wouldn't like it here. Moments
of respite arrived by dream last night.
In front of the museum, the sea wall.

They used to mend cars in our street,
in my rainy first year the future is yours.
My shirts are a history, a cupboard full
of talk. I thought all this would be okay.

•

At the bar the regulars nod their heads,
there are lots of things wrong with me.
These guys have piercing blue eyes down
the end of the telephone line. The leaf
won't lift, the path is light brick, level,
the new road runs high up over austerity.

•

You have a voice that has a hollowness.
Poetry is now parted from mud and in
shallow water. You mash it in the mess
of bog and marsh, towel dry his tongue.

•

Stress bends the accent too far inland
in an alphabet identified by the poet:
small punctures of oiliness, failed surface.

I am having trouble with the truth,
five types of evil which age just like
an uncle from the garage, bloated.

•

Fractal out therefore famous.
Passing the tape landscape.

Passage of breath, mouth like
a closed goat. Most of you don't
leak paracadol, lint zip throat
like drizzle blooms around
the foothills. We discussed these
rights of passage, our madness.

•

I love you, I keep on saying so,
moving the price up but still running,
wet sky like a moved photocopy.

•

It is raining.
Rush in water.
List of water.
Storm breath.
Water problems.
I leak constantly.
I was young.
Believe me.

•

My quick answer in fog? Who cares.
Everything sounds like time passes
at different speeds, a force between
two particles. Theorists believe that
commonsense is not good, scientists
write complex papers, announced by
pain made up from fragments. So much
of our lifetime is spent exploiting
straight edges. This speeds up evolution,
sometimes funding our successes.

We are occasionally conscious of
performing elaborate time-travel,
height down 100mm, weight increase
2.1 kilo in 60 months. We go into
the restaurant and only the dogs
sniff each other. In a different heaven,
I look in my mother's shed, muffled
by analogue age. When the meter man
came the money is gone no one did it.

-

We arrive through thin snow, couldn't
get through. Graffiti from the viaduct
almost reaches heaven, lifts to the sky.
A voice you cannot understand, telling
a joke... Forgotten the ending.

-

After the concert I get a taxi, worn
by drizzle and tired, the radio like
pandemonium, bright and glowing.

-

Dear Peter, on the moors, unknown guidebook,
bog path back out of the far end of Heritage,
up the crowded slog, up steep nothing,
through marsh at the morale-build conference
(best to be prepared), it's morning, it's the end
of the line, the light burns. I smile and smoulder
through this window. On these hills, a sheet
of rain, roar of the wind. Still as hard as ever.
Above us the sun is now shining. We cannot see
to widdle on the dictionaries of polyurethane song.

-

Focus on survivors. Sleep and you'll die.
At the edges of the world, this bus stop.
You should think very seriously about
a pamphlet of poems. Everyone else does.

-

Make it as wet as you can.

Join the crowds mid-morning.

-

Dark wounds with sparks.
The long and winding
fills with water twice
because of demand.

-

Have you seen this? Didn't think so.
It was there last year, not finished.
It's a brilliant piece of plastic surgery
in the dark, encrusted in dreams.

-

I have been speaking at my door
with the distraught. This accounts
for quantum mechanics in the debris,
the dynamic always moves towards
the gone or ghost, bower blessed air.

These things tag life with our spray,
in a constant state of organised flux,
so brashly brilliantly bright. There was
hardly a ripple in the green fluted jar.

-

Something turned skin to sparks:
Bohemianism, Tibetan Buddhism,
the way we can turn lead into gold.

Glitter tattoo, ink on his hands,
it's been a long day waiting.

Think about what you are doing:
doesn't work most of the time.

-

Where else could I be but in the tea room?
It's too late to bring the book out, weather
shapes it all: space elongated, space lost.

-

With so many words why make more?
Mr Finch was always fond of his, the titles
come from systems of happiness, gospel,
composition theory, a small cottage
adjacent to the Italian language edition.

-

sky full of rain
sky full of light
traffic-calmed
forever further
in this city

check the wind
know that rain
walk don't stop
hold that green
scrape your boots

•

Ensure the safe movement of acute stress disorder,
stand around the school gates, smiling. Drive home
and point the way, making it worse. You have no idea.

•

How can I tell you about the contents of Buddhism?
Breathing softly in the woods, myself younger, mumbling.
There would be no dust, absolutely not a timeshare
or special handshake. Death sounds like it's a device.
Don't touch, it'll kill. The arc becomes a shining circle.

•

Please hum. The orgasm is one of the more intense pleasures.
When he found it the spirit was smaller than it should have been.
Please hum. It was all ok after that. Hardly anything hurts.
Breathe again. Fill slowly with beer. The world shifted.

•

Fix the past by deleting seventeen years.
The reality doesn't change, he's not answering.
She was sure but no one looks after 11am
on Saturday. Don't worry if you blink your eyes,
looking in the mirror cannot change divination,
how it is. The city is now spinning, somewhere
it all comes together. The past is invisible,
nothing much matters after that. Like a kiss.

•

Blood like saints slowly dancing, a barbarian hoard
slowly mamboing into the future never ending.
I can't go on tragic shading as movement, therefore
I would like to suggest that the poet could tunnel
to the castle, coming out of London on the elevated
roadway, the trains sliding south and the road
still west, clustered now with ancient names,
where the land sits quiet and makes no comment
as far as the eye can see. Maybe nowhere.

•

Memory rattles and hums but the house is smaller.
At the top of the hill, something remains,
the psychic triangle, a time-mixed corrupter
where the lost were defiled and the fallen is now
fallen into fashionable fact. It often thinks about
itself, something we should know by now is futile,
time wasted in the morning looking up dementia,
the hospital patients, the slow path to death.

•

should be fine
the colour of bone

the man next door
discussing god

things are still going on
that list sounded good

benighted paradise
machineries of joy

around here, somewhere
strange and full of charm

•

in desert deserted
is the mask pure
is the piano certain
is music the lack of silence
is the crow christ turning

after that all done

here in the ground
ever just like this

•

none left now
my last one

everyone loved
what they saw

•

No one recognises him in the bar,
him sliding slowly to the floor.
Ah my friend rewritten:
aiiooiouioaoaoaaiooiiaoaia.

•

Always busy. For as long as you can.
Build our houses quickly, the rain
come through the wall, the bin
unbagged decades back. Cannot
do as you ask, don't know any more.

Dear Land of Hope undrinkable,
sheltered ideas come out of the bush
on rays of light. Nowhere else.
That's the way it is towards evening;
you could hear your own breathing.

•

I sat for hours, plaster and a pall of dust,
and now I am nothing. Make this mess
go away, up the lane between closure
and the zero meridian, up the pub.

•

God's getting his music back,
knee finally unbent. Age
is an absolute must, we go
back to being what we really are.

Glory on trains, austere angels

dousing the holy, song made of
emptiness echoing, shining dust
irradiating the future. Empty now.

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* These poems were produced by writing through both volumes of Peter Finch's *Collected Poems* (Seren, 2022), using the first and last lines of each page, but selecting from them. And also ignoring some and cheating a bit.