

# THE APPLES OF LOVE AND CHAOS



11 Refracted Views Of Lincolnshire

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Dedicated to the memory of my good friend,  
the poet, Ken Smith, 1938 - 2003

'Goodbye England, *that nest of singing birds*'  
- *Hawkwood* -



'There was so much that was real that was not real at all'  
- *This Solitude of Cataracts*, Wallace Stevens

## INTRODUCTION

In 2003 I was selected to take part in **24-8**, a tour which involved 24 writers from the East Midlands of England\*. In addition to readings, this involved the commission of a work that took as its theme 'East Midlands: past, present and future'.

*The Apples Of Love And Chaos* is the result. After a few initial attempts, I decided to go for the loose sequence of poems, in which each poem revealed a different view of the county of Lincolnshire, where I live.

In creating these pieces I employed a variety of styles and techniques, including sampling, pastiche and self-referencing.

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## **1: GRAVITY BEGINS IN LINCOLNSHIRE**

Gravity begins  
in Lincolnshire: the apple,  
ripe and ready, falls.



## 2: CORMAC (4 AND A HALF) LISTENS WITH NEW EARS TO LINCOLNSHIRE

Listen, I say, as we stand alone on the blond road,  
succoured by endless warm air and green flat distance,  
can you hear the sluicing of waters long since drained,  
and the breath of a thousand labourers ploughing the earth  
or the chanting of monks in their godly stone houses  
and the shuffling peasants' feet amid desiccating straws?  
Silly grandpa: just the cock-da-doodle-do of a yonder cock  
and the whizz of buzzy bees and a peewit's *eeh eeh*.



### 3: A CYCLIST'S EXPERIENCE OF MELANCHOLY

a lone cyclist  
sheltering  
under trees  
the light  
first gold  
then pewter  
the rain  
descending  
into the green  
melancholy  
of his regard  
he waits  
for the end



#### 4: THE NOVELIST'S VIEW OF LINCOLNSHIRE

the landscape's long ravelling narratives  
hide everything show nothing but more hiddenness

here be Grendels and submerged sexual headlines of ingrown  
villages built on a tilting, shrinking land

and so I imagine the burked emotions, the squirearchies of corn,  
the scent of jealousy amid fields of beet,

spent sweat and the spittle of anger and sometimes  
the magnetic rivers of witchcraft that pulse between

red farms buckling under a spire-pricked sky



## 5: ERN MALLEY, THE AUSTRALIAN POET, REMEMBERS LINCOLNSHIRE

I had often, in my styptic dreams, consoled myself  
with the chanting of novitiates at Sempringham's well,  
waking to thunderous matins as the gods beat their tattoos  
on the heels of understanding, where the wormwood fen  
makes an integer of the sky -  
only to find that I had fallen far beyond the scope  
of Newton's halcyon ecliptic, having stalled  
with a glass of green absinthe in the taverns of Aphrodite.

The glass of the scryer broke, who rode from Mortlake,  
leather-hooded like a harrier from Nocton Fen,  
upon a black charger, denying the cylinders of the airman.

All foreknowledge shattered, it was a flower dipped  
in liquid hydrogen then struck on the board.

The pressures attained their maximum.  
I wept, as Caesar wept,  
among the Ophone, on the river Gram.

And still I hear them, the adepts of calculus and prism,  
tuning their astral prayers like a madrigal of merry pistons,  
varnishing my days with their benediction.



## **6: TWO OF OUR SAINTS ARE MISSING, OR, THE STOLEN SAINTS OF LINCOLNSHIRE**

St Oswald and St Herefrith.

One to Gloucester, one to Cambridge.

What kind of folk would steal a saint's remains

(Especially one without a head)?



## 7: MOVIE STARS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

My friends sees movie stars everywhere.  
*Here comes Al Pacino*, he'll say as a man  
steps out of the bank in Spalding  
with the lump of a gun in his jacket.

It happens every day -  
*Take a look at Marilyn Monro at the checkout,*  
or *My God, John Wayne selling sandwiches in Skegness!*

He collects them like old postcards. *I got*  
*Robert Mitchum at the garage*, he'll say, or  
*That girl in the supermarket with broccoli in her trolley*  
*- that was Mia Farrow!*

They turn up everywhere: Ginger Rogers driving  
her bottle-green Rover across the Wolds,  
Julie Christie cheering the Imps on at Sincil Bank.

All his life connects this way, the movies  
merging in a cellulose destruction of time:  
*Orson Welles is getting me car insurance;*  
*he gave a me a better quote than Anthony bloody Quinn.*

I wonder how many films he's actually seen  
and whether he knows half his stars are dead.

Sitting alone in a downhill bar  
I begin to see what he means:  
Debbie Harry has taken a break from her tour  
to serve me vodka in here. And behind the bar,  
precise and ruthless in the shadows,  
Clint Eastwood is smoking a cheroot,  
contemplating the number of frames per second,  
the small movements we never see.



## **8: SHAKESPEARE AND MRS TOOGOOD, OR, THE LOST APPLES OF LINCOLNSHIRE**

Welland Pippin & Wharfland Beauty

Cooper's Ambition, Duncombe's Seedling & Dalton's Exquisite

The Post Office, The Parcel Post & The Butcher

Lavender's Seedling & April Beauty

Old Man, Short's Favourite & the Beauty of Lincoln

Peacock & September Scarlet

Shakespeare & Mrs Toogood



## 9: A TAOIST IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Only that which does not seem to move  
runs more swiftly than a hare through a field of barley.

The motionless cloud flies faster than the hare  
and the river that hastens beneath the bridge  
remains where it is by day and night.

Thus at the Root of the Gate of Heaven and Earth  
nothing moves except what is still  
and that which is still moves eternally.



## 10: A NIGHTINGALE IN WOODHALL SPA

Scruffy, plump and unconcerned,  
he deafened all others around him  
at three in the afternoon  
like some drunk back from the bar  
happy, loud, alone,  
unbearably in tune.



## 11: THE APPLES OF LOVE AND CHAOS

I see them everywhere, the appletrees  
I fail to number. Some in gardens, tightly pruned  
or neglected, hung with ropes for children's swings.

Others fruit in green roadside oblivion,  
or cascade to the floor of abandoned orchards  
to be tunnelled by wasps before the brown rot flowers.

These are the apples of love and chaos,  
my uncompleted passion, the apples  
of lust and immortality. I'll plunder them  
where I can, pick them up from the road, or twist and  
snap them from the overhang of a private wall.

I declare them common bounty, as the gift  
of gods who have long since left this earth.

An apple is nothing if not tasted.



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## OTHER WORKS

### **Poetry**

*The Constitution Of Things*  
*Why Should Anyone Be Here And Singing?*  
*Backwards Into Bedlam*  
*The Lean Man Shaving*  
*The Prophecy Of Christos*  
*The Stone Ship*  
*The Ascending Boy*

### **Internet Works (viewable on Art Zero)**

*The Last Of Harry*  
*Return To Eskeleth*  
*Mike Fabulous And His Famous Friends*  
*Portrait Of The Artist As A Cyborg*

### **Limited Edition Texts**

*Chips With Hitler: Six Metafictions*  
*The Dark Female*

### **Ebooks**

*Black Swan Of Trespass*  
*The Dark Female*

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