

SYNESTHETIC RESPONSE

by Douglas Walbourne-Gough, Corner Brook, – Senior Poetry Division

for Andy Woolridge

i) Orange

has attitude, will take your face
and shake your cheeks without warning,
muss your hair before letting you watch
it walk away. Orange has a bad tattoo, waters
its plants with Grand Marnier. Owns a Vespa
and refuses to pay for parking.

Orange likes the idea of romance,
but unlike red it doesn't get obsessed
and would rather if you didn't overthink this.
Orange is Fun tuned to synaesthetic scale
with proficiency in tai chi and lawn darts,
it'll double-dip the guacamole without apology
and goose your bum at church.

Orange will always owe you twenty bucks
and never fail to remind you ain't nothin'
that rhymes with me, dollface. You'll place
another twenty in its hand, absentmindedly
muttering words like porridge and door-hinge
before realizing you're hopelessly in love.

ii) White

Purity, virginal veneer over-applied
to teeth and weddings – Dear White,
I'm not sure I can go through with this.
White would like it if we all had useless rooms
with plastic-covered couches, if we wore flawless
gloves to publicly toss peace-doves to crowds craving
slaughtered lamb. White employs pomp as lifestyle,
never seen a mirror it didn't like.

White wishes it was even brighter,
wants to blind us into believing its brilliance.
It's a smug suit laughing at fallen cyclists
from its gleaming Range Rover, it's the Starbucks
right across from the Starbucks where a library
used to be. That asshole we quietly wish
we had the guts to become.

iii) Red

Well, blood and guts of course, poppies
and roses, how such serious sentiment
can come by bouquet. Raw meat and the kiss
it leaves on the butcher's block, but also brushed
rouge and patent leather shoes (some modern
cupid's cocked revolvers, hip-hung n' ready).

Red is self-explanatory. Hopelessly devoted
to loving the ideal, it's the lip-sticked pig
yearning to be frog just to be kissed into prince.

The reluctant-but-necessary embrace of cliché,
it's true – Red gets a hard time. Bawled its way
through All Dogs Go to Heaven, called the teacher
Mom. Red is alarm, the flash of blood-wild highway eyes,
hell's truest hue. Red is liquid geology bursting forth
to forever alter our landscape, every sunset worth watching,
the coals of every dying fire.

Red is the heart, too big to be denied.