

## SPECULATRIX

Chris McCabe was born in Liverpool in 1977. His three previous poetry collections are *The Hutton Inquiry*, *Zeppelins* and *THE RESTRUCTURE*. He has recorded a CD with The Poetry Archive and was shortlisted for the 2014 Ted Hughes Award. His creative non-fiction book *In the Catacombs: A Summer Among the Dead Poets of West Norwood Cemetery* was published in 2014. His work has been described by *The Guardian* as 'an impressively inventive survey of English in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.' He works as the Poetry Librarian at the Poetry Library and teaches for the Poetry School.

ALSO BY CHRIS MCCABE

POETRY

*The Hutton Inquiry* (Salt Publishing, 2005)  
*Zeppelins* (Salt Publishing, 2008)  
*The Borrowed Notebook* (Landfill, 2009)  
*THE RESTRUCTURE* (Salt Publishing, 2012)

DRAMA

*Shad Thames, Broken Wharf* (Pinned in the Margins, 2010)

NON-FICTION

*In the Catacombs: A Summer Among the Dead Poets of West Norwood Cemetery* (Pinned in the Margins, 2014)

COLLABORATIONS

*Gnomes* with Tom Jenks (Red Ceilings Press, 2012)  
*The Debris Field* with Simon Barraclough and Isobel Dixon (Sidekick Books, 2013)  
*Whitehall Jackals* with Jeremy Reed (Nine Arches Press, 2013)  
*Pharmapoetica: a dispensary of poetry* with Maria Vlotides (Pedestrian Publishing, 2013)

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‘Teenage Riot’ was written for an evening of poetry for Sonic Youth organised by Stinky Bear Press, and was inspired by the music of Louis Zukofsky’s “A”. Many of these poems were recorded for the Archive of the Now and are available as audio on their website.



# Speculatrix



*Dedicated to Mark E. Smith, the last Jacobean*



# Black Lodge Recorder

*after David Lynch's Twin Peaks*

A black box is a device which has input & output mechanisms. Its internal workings are unknown. It is of the starling family & can often be heard saying "Leo, no!" Almost anything can be described as a black box, even the human mind. It is distinct for its wattled feet. The opposite of a black box is a snow warbler chirruping in porcelain. The death of a black box is often used in avant-garde TV dramas to set the tone for the series : ludic but chilling. Most black boxes now come pre-installed with Syrinx v.6. Although these devices are omnivores – eating mainly insects & fruit – their blood is redder than expected when it drips on an opened box of doughnuts. Humans, to pacify their lust for displayed intelligence, often attribute black boxes with names such as Waldo. Most species nest in holes so cages expose them to things they can't forget. "Leera, Leera; don't go there." Sometimes they repeat these things : "hurting me." Later models have developed extravagant facemasks as if it to remain anonymous. They have two eyes that turn clockwise to record & the voice licks itself strapped to black spools. Even when the black box is shot with a bullet its voice remains captured. "Stop it, stop it. Leo, no!" Although called a black box a black box is actually bright orange to make location easier after a disaster. The orange is the same colour as a mynah bird's beak.



spēcūlātrīx , īcis, f. speculor,  
I. she that spies or watches, a (female) spy, watcher.

Charlton T. Lewis & Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford:  
Clarendon Press, 1879)



Write thee up bawd, in St Paul's; have all thy tricks  
Of coz'ning with a hollow coal, dust, scrapings,  
Searching for things lost, with a sieve, and shears,  
Erecting figures, in your rows of houses,  
And taking in of shadows, with a glass\*

\* *glass*, a crystal or beryl ball which is supposedly  
entered by angels which can be discerned and  
understood by a *speculatrix*

New Mermaids edition of Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (London: A & C  
Black, 1991)



## The Revenger's Tragedy

In which Vindice speaks, avenging the death of his betrothed Gloriana at the hands of the Duke. The Duke is coaxed into kissing the poisoned skull of Gloriana and dies. We are here, Bankside, London, 1604.

I've seen skulls with better teeth than this excessive  
in death as an eunuch's archived *Playboys*  
After the extraction the black sock in the ditch of the  
mouth a debit of bones cindered in corsets as  
Southwark's abscess drains green in the  
Thames Just another *parched and juiceless luxur*  
Back in the summerhouse I kissed a face once new, now  
skulled nude just to feel what absence was a rat  
bloated the one hole of light & now all authorship is  
apocrypha, in the gross scheme of things I wear  
these bones in my mouth when we kiss  
so you know how the grave plugs the mud with  
the fillings of us O Gloriana *A bone-setter one*  
*that sets bones together* counts for me the citrus pips

set in the black cement                    men tossed overboard  
at The Cut            where white noise is a street cleaner  
buffing an ambulance exhaust    I found a booklet  
called EXTRACTIONS, it included your name & a  
gauze swab    Here comes Death Dressed as Folly &  
it's like the Reaper's fancydressed for the callcentre  
I have failed once again, I have no brother  
SUPERVACUO, I have no brother AMBITIO.

Link me in the rain, where the cockroach of the cab  
scratches its back with wipers    Link me because what  
are teeth but calcified time plugged in pulp & dentine  
& gumline            The Glóbe on Google Earth like a  
shitbasin of rivets, a cistern of balconies            where the