



How to Witness the World with a Distance

Barbican Young Poets
2013–14

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 **Guildhall
SCHOOL**
of Music & Drama

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Contents

| | | | |
|--|-------|--|-------|
| Anthony Adler Coconut Crab, Mia Anima Canute Goes to the Seaside | 6–7 | Rena Minegishi Tokyo / Beijing After the Argument | 30–31 |
| Shoshana Anderson Redwood | 8–9 | Luke E.T Newman How to Father the Father in Three Minutes Ya Hobb (In the Name of Love) | 32–33 |
| Indea Barbe-Willson Where Charred Minds Go Paint-Stripped Doors | 10–11 | Damilola Odelola Lego People And the Stuff that Comes Before a Fall | 34–35 |
| Sunayana Bhargava Tiling Wallpaper Ghosts | 12–13 | Kareem Parkins–Brown It's Not the Hinges; Change the Door We Knew Before | 36–37 |
| Cameron Brady–Turner Bend Sinister Living Alone: An Experiment | 14–15 | Kieron Rennie Tottenham | 38–39 |
| Katie Byford Letters Night and Day in the Midwest | 16–17 | Amaal Said He Loves Me, He's Just Hurting Vollsmose | 40–41 |
| Omar Bynon Are We? The Blue | 18–19 | Ankita Saxena To Blink (Verb) Times Square – Halloween / The A4 – Karva Chaut | 42–43 |
| James Coghill IP6 9PS To a Station of the Overground | 20 | Isabel Stoner Innocence Why Don't We All Dance this Way? | 44–45 |
| Greer Dewdney Meant to Be Sibling Rivalry | 21 | Will Tyas Illinois Specular | 46–47 |
| Emily Harrison I Can't Sleep 'Cause My Bed's on Fire T-Cut | 22–23 | Harry Wilson Light/Gold White Cliff Country | 48–49 |
| Dillon Leet The Accident Thank You Letter | 24–25 | Antosh Wojcik Living in the Ozone Layer with Major Tom After He Lost Ground Control The Novelty of Flying has a Strange Odour | 50–51 |
| Lana Masterson Lost Generation | 26–27 | | |
| Kiran Millwood Hargrave Dulcet Golden Shovel | 28–29 | | |

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The Barbican Young Poets featured within this anthology are a central part of our now established community of young artists here at the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama; their inspirational work continually feeds into our vision for world class arts and learning.

We are grateful to the young poets for their sustained commitment to the programme, and for the wonderful poetry and spoken word that they have created over the last six months. They made a fantastic impact through their cross arts interaction with UVA's *Momentum*, currently in the Curve, responding to the installation and performing inside the gallery during our Barbican Weekender: We Create. The poets also continued to inspire others to write and perform, setting up a writing studio and audio booth at the Curve exit, where they encouraged people to write and record their own responses to the exhibition. Their presence was also felt at Dialogue, a major annual Creative Learning project, where current and alumni poets worked with participating community-based groups and performed as part of the final event in the Guildhall School's brand new Milton Court building.

Coming up we have Snapshot Songs, which will see seven poets working in collaboration with composer Stuart Hancock on a new song cycle – generously commissioned by the SHM Foundation – to write and perform poems that will provide a thread linking the various songs together. As if that wasn't enough to be getting on with, the poets have also been involved with the extraordinary collaboration At Sixes and Sevens, creating and performing with musicians and poets from Derry-Londonderry in Northern Ireland. What a year!

On behalf of all of the participating poets and Creative Learning staff involved in delivering the programme, I would like to thank Jacob Sam-La Rose and Kayo Chingonyi for their commitment and dedication to each of the poets, and for continuing to support them with their ongoing development as young artists.

It is ever a delight to work with such a talented group of young people; we hope you find the same enjoyment in reading the work collected here in their anthology.

Sean Gregory

Director of Creative Learning
Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama

In 2009, I was searching for a new home for the work I was doing to build a community of young poets, a community that would be focused on an appreciation of both the craft of writing and the performance of poetry. I approached the Barbican – I'd worked on Barbican projects in the past, and I was inspired by the way the Creative Learning department invested in young people with a genuine sense of care and faith in the quality of work that young and emerging creatives could produce.

Fast forward to present day, and I find myself poring over another of our annual anthologies, celebrating the continued successes of the programme we started five years ago. As a project, we've grown in size, and we've diversified. We continue to maintain a balance of fresh blood and longer-serving members of the community in our intake, but we're also doing more for the extended family of poets who can no longer participate in the core programme. This year, I'm proud to be able to welcome Kayo Chingonyi to the teaching team as my assistant tutor – a celebrated young poet in his own right, he joins a lengthening line of poets who've shared the load of leading the programme with me, a line which includes poets and educators such as Miriam Nash, Dorothy Fryd and Jasmine Cooray.

The stakes are higher. Our poets are studying at Oxford and Cambridge, managing and programming their own events in south-east London venues and beyond, launching their own publishing companies, collaborating with national and international partners, but the centre – the core of our effort – remains: each of the poets you read in this anthology is invested in being the strongest poet he or she can be, and true to his or her own particular vision. That investment is one of the many things that makes this programme such a joy to work with.

As always, many thanks must be extended to the Barbican for their sustained support of the Barbican Young Poets project, and particularly to Lauren Monaghan-Pisano, who doesn't just serve as a tireless liaison or administrative staff member, but is truly a part of the community we've created.

Jacob Sam-La Rose

Barbican Young Poets



Coconut Crab, Mia Anima

My patronus? I'd like a giant squid, which
you tell me is entirely unsuitable,
which is gratifying. My sister in a kindly
moment said my daemon might well be an owl.
& if I murdered someone & was saddled with
an inescapable familiar I've got
no clue what it would be. A chimpanzee? A shrew?
A kitten-eating crab? (They're real; look it up.)
My soul is in my pocket, hums against my leg
because you love me or because
it's raining and my sister's asking for a lift.
I take it out & hold it in my hand, go back
to doing whatever thing I had been doing,
probably, mia anima, my life, my soul.

Canute Goes to the Seaside

I'll be a fossil, an ossified footnote, a flash-frozen shadow,
building a castle or knocking it down, it doesn't matter which
because I'll be a fact, part of the record.
They'll say indisputably I was a man who got his feet wet,
one way or the other; they'll say I dabbled in the tide.

One way or the other, they'll say I dabbled in the tide;
they'll say indisputably I was a man who got his feet wet
because I'll be a fact; part of the record,
building a castle or knocking it down, it doesn't matter which.
I'll be a fossil. An ossified footnote. A flash-frozen shadow.

Redwood

My mother has always been
a tall tree in a long storm,
stripped of leaves
but there the next morning.
Roots pushing up pavement,
branches curved around the sun.

She says every time the world ends
she spends weeks trapped in curved glass.
The buildings bend with the sky,
the sidewalk ripples,
there are no straight lines.

Morning coffee pours
like fresh cement.

The first time was when grandpa died.
Nineteen seventy something.
Nothing ever quite realigned.

Sometimes she talks about it
like it happened in another life
and she only catches flashes of it
in her dreams.

Other times someone goes past in
the car he used to drive and
I can see her breathing in
forty year old cigarette smoke.

The last time was over ten years ago.
The sky was falling.

She says she ran so hard
she forgot to breathe,
but I can still see flecks of metal
in the air when she coughs,
an imperceptibly small cloud of ash
when she throws herself onto
the couch too fast.

I know she hears a hundred floors
collapsing one by one
every time I forget to quietly close the door.

I know she is always waiting for the world to end
but now she sends us photos of the sun setting.
She wants us to learn to let things go.
A tall tree in a long storm,
now leaves grow.

Shoshana Anderson





Where charred minds go,
where tired eyes rest,

where our stanch offerings
are seen, sung like ancient songs;

more than vermillion Sindoor
or bruised, fragrant flowers
in silver offering bowls.

Between the purple heather
of a wet moorland,
in the silver bowls of the north,

the deep tarns and lochs
of slow, earthly strength, that smith
the mountain starlight of the north

and hum through bones and ore.
The unbeliever's sacred form,

slow moving structure and
blessing, like rain.

paint-stripped doors
like lotus flowers

with soft scent
of naked timbers

their bodies aligned
with the planes of the floors

balanced
perfectly zen on their hinges

the stars on the screensaver
spangle and shower

over us as we lie
on the soft bed

our bodies aligned
with the planes of the floors

Toiling

I woke up to the groan
of unwitting athletes labouring
on that unsympathetic dawn
treadmill.

Sticky tarmac heat collapsed
in the back of balloon lungs,

while rattling engines chauffeured
pollution, in first class, to the capital's
fast paced heart.

Time and money were workaholics
who never requested a day off

I almost felt bad for burying myself
in quilts and marshmallow pillows

with a half open eye surveying
the naked morning frost

I watched dewdrops envelope
each other at the corner of the window

Sun-scorched headfirst sprint into
some midday salvation, combined
into a ballet suite of Tchaikovsky
which began and ended in seconds.

I realised that all work is noble
in spite of its magnitude

and nudged the bones in your wrist
from under the covers

whispered to an imaginary devil,
that binges on life's abundant chores
My lips enrobed by your fingers
'His idle hands will always be my work'
and never yours.

Wallpaper Ghosts

A dim limb of a light bulb
dangles from the ceiling,
your circuit-board hands trace
the 40 watt demise of a nearby
fruit fly, burning on the wall.

Its shadow is sap,
I eavesdrop on your breathing
and listen for death.





Bend Sinister

And that's where I came in:
the initial switcharoo, transplanting
coal for teddy in the sleeping boy's arms,
then a whole circus of tricks.
I had to learn quickly; how to diffuse
daddy in the phone with a click,
the daily pick-up, edicts to counter intuition
like 'titles aren't in blood but earned'
and all those doing words like 'fathering'
that you don't hear much – a frisbee's
deft trick of itself. We'd got away
to Sutton-on-Sea, and here, disc in hand,
I transfigured; would whip the air
like cream, lay an eclipse
across the loungers. The kid
would lift the lid on my secrets,
but hock it, and it would skid off the axis,
capsize and freewheel to the sand.
I knew better, caressed it, knew its tilt
and loll, its reluctance to rush
and slid it lush onto a crest of air,
traced its lazing zip-line trajectory
until I got so good that I could ram it
chin up into the sun and have it
hurtle back to my open palm.
Once I had learned the reverse fling
I could dive, predict its physic, pluck it
ripe from its course with a snappy puppet hand
and loose it back before I hit the sand.
I returned to my brother
an Olympian, and taught him
all I knew about the counter-intuition
and this art of letting go.

Living Alone: An Experiment

Lonely the loquacious rain; lonely spring-
loaded; lonely faking a yawn and curling

its arm around you. Lonely in the morning
trying to put socks on toes with loose nails.

The fridge-raider, lonely. Lonely over-
thinks it; lonely the pickpocket in

fingerless gloves, a lovely hand on your leg.
Lonely forgetting to call lonely back.

Lonely ticking friendship on dating sites
and meaning it; lonely assiduously

taking notes. Lonely at the party,
mind kept running outside, driver screaming

'go!'; the front-page splash, mics pistoling you
on your doorstep, begging for a quote. Lonely

the cut-out sprung in a house of horrors
as a prank. Lonely smashing its head

over and over into a mirror
in its last-ditch attempt to vanish.

Letters

Dear Agony,
small hummingbird, you
must not understand; do not
drape your hide over
my cold body.

Dear Agony,
I cannot help but
glance along your collarbone,
the nape of your neck,
O Ecstasy.

Dear Agony,
there is a ghost; he
takes his names each day from my
self-loathing: curdle
his sweet pity.

Dear Agony,
he must not waste his
time on me, for he begins
to mold lungs for me
to breathe and see.

Dear Agony,
does a universe
exist where our clammy hands
brush together? Non,
petite chérie.

Dear Agony,
are you a dumb, blunt
instrument? No; I am your
asylum, a rope
in purgatory.

Agony, do not
abandon me: I cannot
swim his depths without
your company.

Form: Haikuplets

The structure of every stanza
in a swarm of haikuplets:

Line 1: a 4-syllable line, which
will repeat at the beginning
of each subsequent stanza in
the poem except the last.

Lines 2-4: a haiku (7
syllables/5 syllables/7 syllables
and a 'turn' or 'kireji').

Line 5: a 4-syllable line which
rhymes with the repeating refrain
at the beginning of the stanza, but
which changes in each stanza.

So, in effect, each stanza is a
couplet embracing a haiku,
except the poem's conclusion.

Night and Day in the Midwest

My mother boils tomatoes in a saucepan. The heat seeps
into their skins and she eases them off like shells
or fishscales, peeling them away in ribbons. She reminds me

of the boiling city, sun focused on tall buildings
with glass windows scraped right down to the sky's
blue quick. We wandered through people's heads

as they sprouted all kinds of colours: we watched some
with vines wriggling down their necks,
berries drooping over their eyes; hipsters

flocking together in a purple daze
to polaroid their evening in snaps of grainy sunshine
and lie down stoned on the freeway

as if it were grass. And we stood still on the Great
Lake Michigan; the boiling salamander's back
twisted and basked in the warmth,

curling its head up towards
whatever heaven it heard singing in Chicago's
bronze bones, in its concrete feet and glass eyes.

*

Further back in the city's brain, in its subconscious,
on its suburban outskirts where the land grows flatter
and the air gets thin, smooth tarmac slurs

the soles of invisible people. Funny how
houses can reek dead from the inside and still
have cars in the driveway. Slat of weatherboarding

lean over each other to spy on the neighbours and every
| gable | gable | gable | cut from black butter
gnaws at chewy brick-lined teeth

worn red with boredom. Overbearing
streetlamps fling wide their glaring sheen
on children's heads to protect

against starlight, houses with their backs against the night,
boiled sweets sucked to bald gleaming eggs,
a row of knuckles cowering behind the sidewalk.

But their suburban skins will give themselves up
to my hands, they will peel and bloom
greasy and sweet in the pan's dark well.

Mothers know these things and daughters learn them.

Are We?

You were never my everything
But we will carry on
Exploding through life with nothing but each other in our eyes,
Blind to collateral damage.
We were two Western governments smelling oil,
Two oppressed Arabs tasting heaven.
That day we first collided we were
Willing to give up anything for each other.
Now are we?

Now are we
Willing to give up anything for each other?
That day we first collided we were
Two oppressed Arabs tasting heaven,
We were two Western governments smelling oil
Blind to collateral damage,
Exploding through life with nothing but each other in our eyes.
But we will carry on.
You were never my everything.

The Blue

This city greets me with a grey smile
I dream of being where the blue is
Where polyester kites fly above corrugated roofs
Where sunlight glints off an elephant's bathing spot
Where the salmonella ice cream is cool but the weather hot
Where the children laugh in a language only my soul understands
She sits alone
But one of them
A Bollywood actress being brought up by wolves
She remains subtly majestic despite her dogged tiredness
Her face is pink at the edges
Her smile weary
Though uncompromised
Her eyes teary
Just from staying open for so long
But she refuses to miss a second of this
So she keeps blinking to a minimum
Children the colour of cinnamon who smell like poverty and dust
Have taught this nutmeg girl how to smile
Meanwhile
I sit in a grey classroom in a grey country hoping she returns soon
But for now
She tames wolves
Whilst I howl to the moon



Omar Bynon

IP6 9PS

Blue murmur,
birdsong at
4 in
the morning:

I swear

it was no Blackbird, but
the Oriole I'd always dreamt of.

To a Station of the Overground

It was not the faces I noticed at first,
running through the scene bodiless as thoughts,
but the whole broken gloss rat-run of its
botched concrete sides the tumbling greens
of Buddleja and mosses plump, wet jewels
of Hart's Tongue Ferns lapping the rain spilt
off the ruddy brows of bricks, off the thunder-strip
of roads orbiting just above here,
buzzing the world into one vast, grey drawl.

Distracted, I strolled the tunnel of my senses
from place to place from the score of this
blinded, urban shape to Cornish grottos
where the rock brims with eyes:
a vertebral granite blanketed in algal shades,
spilling onwards, out from the past, over time's
soft scarp, drenching this station
in farflung sensations to the point nostalgia
plugs my ears, train-sound dying to a trickle.

Meant to Be

I was making conversation.
You said it was intimidating.
It was meant to be.
We didn't have much in common.
You'd all arrived far too drunk for proper introductions, and pretty soon
they didn't seem worth bothering with.

I was making tequila slammers.
You said it was impressive.
It was meant to be.
We didn't have much to say.
You'd all arrived together, but the others left long before you.
They didn't see a reason to stay past the last song.

I thought it was fun.
You thought it was meant to be.

Sibling Rivalry

My brother was born on a blue beanbag on the living room floor.
I lay oblivious in my parents' bed
and in the morning he seemed swaddled in the black and red curtains.
Three weeks later, I threw a two litre bottle of pop across the same living room.
That was my first attempt to get rid of him.

My second attempt involved scrawling his name in chalk
across the upstairs hallway.
Yellow calligraphy as high as my head
spelling out the unnecessary presence.
I was foiled by his not yet being able to hold a pencil.

Having failed with cunning, I returned to brute force,
let him smash his head in a revolving door
and didn't make a concerned face quite quickly enough.
As my father carried him concussed through our grey front door,
I realised perhaps he was a permanent fixture.

Later, he decorated
the television set with oil paints and pushed wax crayons into the gas fire.
He blamed it on me, but I couldn't be angry
because by then,
I was ready to kill anybody who tried to hurt him.



I Can't Sleep 'Cause My Bed's on Fire

I turn to a nurse and say
'If there's one place you can't be embarrassed about your dance moves,
it's in a psych ward.'

I had joked earlier, sat down plastic next to Danny.
'What you get?'
'Double vodka coke.'

We find courage
thumbing the ridges of the vending machine cup.

Tonight - Friday night - is a game of musical paper plates.

It's much harder to drag someone up to the dance floor
without physical contact
but slowly others join us
as if someone held up a huge cardboard sign
telling them they were allowed to.

Danny, arm in sling, does his best to show off
and to me
it looks like the first time he has ever danced.

I watch from the fence,
his pupils sink to plastic,
as if wishing hard enough
could turn water into wine.

T-Cut

He smiles like he needs two front teeth; barely speaks.
I spend my childhood talking for him,
inherit his rod-straight spine and an ability to never let sympathy
leak into empathy.

We were sat in the car the first time,
his white Mondeo R reg., he said that sometimes
the headaches are so painful it's like a frontal lobe chainsaw.

That summer insomnia cut off his middle finger with the lawn mower.

One day he gets out of the shower and complains
about the wet dog smell and the postman
won't come to the front door.

We are told to watch out for cling-film eyes,
a crimson ring around the bathtub
and if he starts Bible quotes we know the number to ring.

He dances like his shins are being bitten.

Three years later I am home for the summer.
An accident at the factory leaves him scarred.

We have a bonding session.

We say things that sound like they could be said to anybody
but when I mention those bastard headaches
his stare sets like when credits roll
without him noticing.

He's cleaned the same spot on the car 15 times already.
I'm waiting for the colour to rub off.



The Accident

A new form – every sentence starts with 'tell me,'
stanza length decreases by one line each time.

Tell me I'm a bird,
half-drunk off plane fumes
and lack of oxygen,
flying figures of eight
above messy houses
which smear across my vision
like dirt on a window,

or a speaker
pulsing out heartbeats
in a nightclub that stinks
of detergent and roses.
People bounce by like disco balls.

Tell me I'm bread
that didn't rise. Fat chefs
in white blow bubbles into me
with old-fashioned straws
until I swell like a secret.

Tell me I'm rain
that runs along seams
in the street, catching grit
and the last afternoon light.

Tell me I'm a caterpillar.
When the bandages
come off, I'll have wings.

Tell me you're sorry,
and hold my hand.

Thank You Letter

I'll leave before the garbage man comes
and the day dries and solidifies,
like amber. Your floorboards and family
portraits stay silent, but my child's backpack
will smack a light or hollow vase,
and you'll wake up anyway.
We'll hug like strangers at a funeral,
careful not to upstage the moment
with a smile or unscripted joke.

There are always cold bagels
and kisses goodbye; two for the Spanish,
four for the French, none if you are Japanese
or still crying. There will be makeup on your hair
and hands which will stain my shirt
and I'll tell you I don't mind.
You'll turn away before the door closes.

Behind me the house will shrink like a lung
as I pick my way through the potted plants
your grandmother gets you every Christmas.
I'll trip on a knot of tulips.
Later bruises will develop,
like pictures from a negative.

Sometimes you'll check if I've left anything,
but I've learnt to slip my phone
into my front pocket and blow my smell
out an open window, so the room is empty
as if someone turned off an old projection
and stopped pretending it was a ghost.

Lost Generation

A generation tweeting in letter limits, capitals and melancholy.
Hearts aren't born subjective,
but expression gets reflected, connected and misread it is,
that we're all saying YOLO then going SOLO...

We've stopped being guerrilla artists and tuned into guerrilla by Bruno
Mars, it's - if home is where the heart is, then we're all home sick wanting X Factor stardom.
Russell Brand's call for revolution got us all sharing that video quick,

But I can't find the actions? Who's using megaphones on street ends making change happen?

And it's all recent, who can sleep in this bedroom tax these days that's grabbing Lambeth and
Poverty deeper into tired struggles, we inhale the fail of sales, and let our hearts end up in jail
And we can't breathe it all out in a city of lost lighters, I mean a city of lost hope.

Writing on the flood lines, I didn't come dressed up to resist
pop icons lost their young rebellion
To a life style glittered with all things unloved, desperate and famous.

Memories crammed into Instagram, this generation is the wrecking ball.
Now you're the talk of the town, and the silence of yourself, the violence of your wealth
I shut my eyes, dream up anything else than this loud silence and this rap dream overused

so I'll just sing along to *Lost Generation* and all my feelings might be excused.

Lana Masterson

Dulcet

I leave you amazed, relearning
my tongue. On it sits

a coin-small egg, sugar shelled
as a Christmas almond.

I make a cave of my mouth to carry it
from your house, already dissolving.

Later, I hatch a list of words to clasp
between my molars:

kinglest, haruspice, river, blue.

Now, I lay one to each shadow
of your body –

river against the weblines
of your ribs,

haruspice in the centre-dark
of your stomach,

let blue catch and tangle through
the heather of your arm-pit,

breathe kinglest along the echo chamber
of your neck. They nest there,

small words, live seeds rooting
in the heat of your wrist, its soft fire.

Golden Shovel

After Margaret Atwood
In the form of Terrance Hayes' eponymous poem

i. 1995

We were drawn by the dark. You
always said your Ma would have a fit
if she knew the shade of trouble we were into.
You always said she would blame me.

To her, you were golden – like
a best-loved song, you were a
kind of therapy, she loved you hook
line and sinker. She was into
nothing else. To her, you were an
easing of her aching core; the apple of her eye.

She had you leashed to her, a
pocket-child. Nights, we'd fish
for the moon until she threw her hook,
called you home. You'd go before yourself, an
already closing body, the momentarily open
door already latching behind each eye.

ii. 2013

Heat shimmying though August doors, you-
r mother in her hospital bed, fit-
ted rubber sheets squeaking as she into-
nes every wrong you ever did her. Me-

atless to her bones, you two are without like-
ness. No edge left, her voice a
thrown scarf ragged at her throat, no hook
left to cast. She has stopped eating, is turning into
angled shadows. She scents conspiracy. And
I always knew about her! We leave. The eye-

let curtains drop. Even at a
distance, she swears like a fish-
wife. Slut! Bitch! Hook-
er! The sun paces the sky, an an-
imal light, scissoring shut our open
lids, sewing tears in your needled eye.



Kiran Millwood Hargrave



Tokyo

Everyone wonders why I left you. Some even ask. I have an answer prepared: you reeked of scented bleach, I couldn't sleep without pretending I was a prodigy of the digital age who'd wake up in the morning with a glistening chassis and no olfaction. Sounds like the kind of thing you'd be into, too – you'd act normal (you loved being normal) but I could tell that on Saturdays as the Yamanote Line dug an oval through the geography of our brains, you were fantasising about being disinfected, architectural and from 2047. You were fucked up. And painfully new. When I asked about your family and the ancient house they breathe in, you rang the contractor and the house was demolished in seventy-three minutes. Your grandmother left a clean imprint in the concrete. 'Now we don't have to worry about in-law politics,' you said and proposed to me with a bottle of dishwashing liquid. You loved power. You had it for breakfast every morning.

After the Argument

After the argument we went up to the bedroom where the floor had split and birthed a lake. No fish, no stars, but moss in our mouths we sat, still-tide evening between us. Somewhere, a lament. All my words sank like bodies with faces swept blank.

Beijing

Everyone says you're dirtier now that we've broken up. Sometimes I say *I'm relieved* and other times I find myself searching for your photos, my fingers condensed into an obsessed and blinking cursor. Pixels frosting on the angular lines of your body, I send my hot breaths towards the little white lights: my face glowing, my lungs charring and your laughter resounding in every inch of biotic tissue I carry, what are you doing to yourself this year? Probably smoking up every chimney and car pipe, riding around on electric drills and the earth-shaking revelation of finding Something New. You counted in millions. We were happiest when I pooled cool beer in my throat and you paid for them with counterfeit notes. The bartender beat me and you cried, laughing with your tongue on my bruises. You there, with your dusty hair and browned fingers, rolling me onto the pavement, disrobing both of us to renew our dead-end oaths and bloodlines.



How to Father the Father in Three Minutes

Lines in italics represent lines adapted from Sam Willets' Poem

A visit from mystery takes place.

Around twenty two minutes past ten, over a small and thin beech diner table, Dad dies.

The room grows and shrinks,
never ending winter breaks its promise to mirror my losses,
though,
through the window,
it seems, the downpour does pour one pathetic fallacy away with it .
Dad.

My mouth holds one 'oh' for the lost soul;

Then the silence explains itself
and the bowl below him overflows.

A tight-lipped mouth deep with warm noodles and bold expectations is let go,
by its only and last 'oh?'

In the deep water of his rocking spoon,
flicking soup from side to side ,
I see his eyes firm up and his body freeze in front of me.

The final limp labors of a boy un-son me,
and the shallow drop of man in him, is exposed and
slurped, out of his mouth, across the dinner table and up into my mine, through a long noodle;
and the same long 'oh'.

So.

No answers now to a son's questions,
though who would ask them now is a worthwhile mention.

Dad, dead:

Mystery takes leave, around ten twenty five,

Ya Hobb (In the Name of Love)

Inspired by a Dhafer Youssef song by the same name

Tonight.

Because the bed don't keep me,
i will find 115 lines, to fold and greet me.
There will be,
go-betweens, broken glass,
no betweenes,
for I'm, forever last.
check the mean.
Bed won't keep me,
Rest, won't, sleep me.

Tonight.

Because the death won't reap me.
i will find 115 lines to cleanly life me.
There will be,
go-betweens, broken glass
and no betweenes,
for i'm forever last, yeah
Check the mean.
Death won't reap me,
life, won't, clean, me.

Tonight.

Because the nurse never, and do not wet me,
115 lines will i be drip-drying through IV,
will i, gain an immunisation from ?
will i, teef some patience from,
will i, reap sensations from.
Receipts all emblazoned on...

There will be

go-betweens, Broken glass,
no betweenes,
for I'm for ever last,
Check the means:
breasts don't need me, mary, don't, feed, me.

Tonight!

Because the twinkle in my father's eye did not sparkle to fetch me,
115 lines can expect me.
Go-betweens, Broken glass,
no betweenes,
forever last,
tongue between,
the folds of glass,
teasing
at a my bro

ken...

Tonight.

Because the mirror won't reflect me,
230 lines will inflect me, on me, in me, for me and
with me,
so
between.

First,

you have got to believe in a rose tint
then,
what i tend to do, is shade my eyes with something,
a hat perhaps ?
in this instance, the one that Archie gave me, that,
beaten off-grey bucket hat, like the one U-God
wears, except, well, his one is black.
Then, i tend to naked my white torso, entirely.

Tonight

Because if there's no now,
then i fake it,

Tonight

because if somebody else has my now,
then i take it,

Tonight.

231 lines,

1

for

mourning.

Lego People

I build these lives that are more often than not
stained and soiled with stuff that bleach can't remove.

There is someone, on this train, who is worried
about reaching the destination in one piece

-
She's newly engaged but she's not
sure how to tell her husband.

-
What will happen when
the train stops,
and they have to get off?

-
Single father to the left
only does Asda shopping on Wednesday nights
because hump day needs some sort of celebration.

-
Someone is going to fall in love
with where they're going
because it's not home.

-
The man with the thick greying beard
and smart, tailored suit, was homeless three
years ago.

-
The school girl by the window has
too many things dancing through her,
stomping into her bones,
this journey is her time for solace.

The train will always do what it was made to.
It will pick, and drop all the lego people,
not always taking them where they want to be,
or need to be,
but usually finding the lost ones.

I build these lives that are more often than not
stained and soiled with stuff that bleach can't remove,
knowing that sympathy carves a smile that
can stitch someone's day together.



And the Stuff that Comes Before a Fall

After Masculine by Terrance Hayes

Punching that other guy in the face
because he insulted the very cause
of your existence, when he uttered those
almost life-ending words,
'Your mum'.

And worrying that your little brother
is too soft because he is father-less,
doesn't like to fight,
and a few times in his short history
has wanted to paint his nails.

'Be a man.'

But the well of salt-water,
in your best-friend's cheeks.

Or hiding your men in the back
of closets, beside the straight porn,
behind the crisp, stiffened shirts,
under the mirror-shined, patent lace-ups
and bell-bars.

And using women like sanitary towels;
a new one at regular intervals,
to catch all the dying inside you,
It never quite works.

Loving your mother,

but being afraid of women
who love themselves,
just as much as they love
you.

It's Not the Hinges; Change the Door

Silence is so accurate.
We never go on holiday –
it's as if our holidays are on holiday.
A single mother salary is not
supposed to have wings on both sides,
you're given oars to stay afloat.

Our flat had a life before us.

Mum hymns God
hoping His answer to be a wrecking ball to the face.

Lonely only child: I play in that L corner.

I break the things that can't fight back.

I know the sky is Heaven's door
in Heaven all the lights stay on
we call the light pouring out the peephole 'the sun'.
Mum sings high notes to God.
Sit me on one of them
I want to chat man-to-man.

We Knew Before

After Roger Robinson

Amber was the girl I fancied and my favourite time of sky.

When Ricky said he heard me shout
STOP when he was alone
I knew my voice had teeth.

The first spin of the bottle: there's a shot left inside,
it flails like a supermarket tantrum
[probably thinking how has a beach become my prison?]
and my stomach does the same,
churning the butterflies to butter.

The boys from rival schools are into jumping
as if they learned life from rooftops.
The four of us though, never — our fathers
either chose to be ghosts or were made into them.
The four of us though, never — our mothers
buy shoes we'll grow into. If we're destined
to be giants we need to know the feel of bigger feet.

Earl wants us to stop being so friendly with his girl.

The girls can only break us up for a short time.



Kareem Parkins-Brown

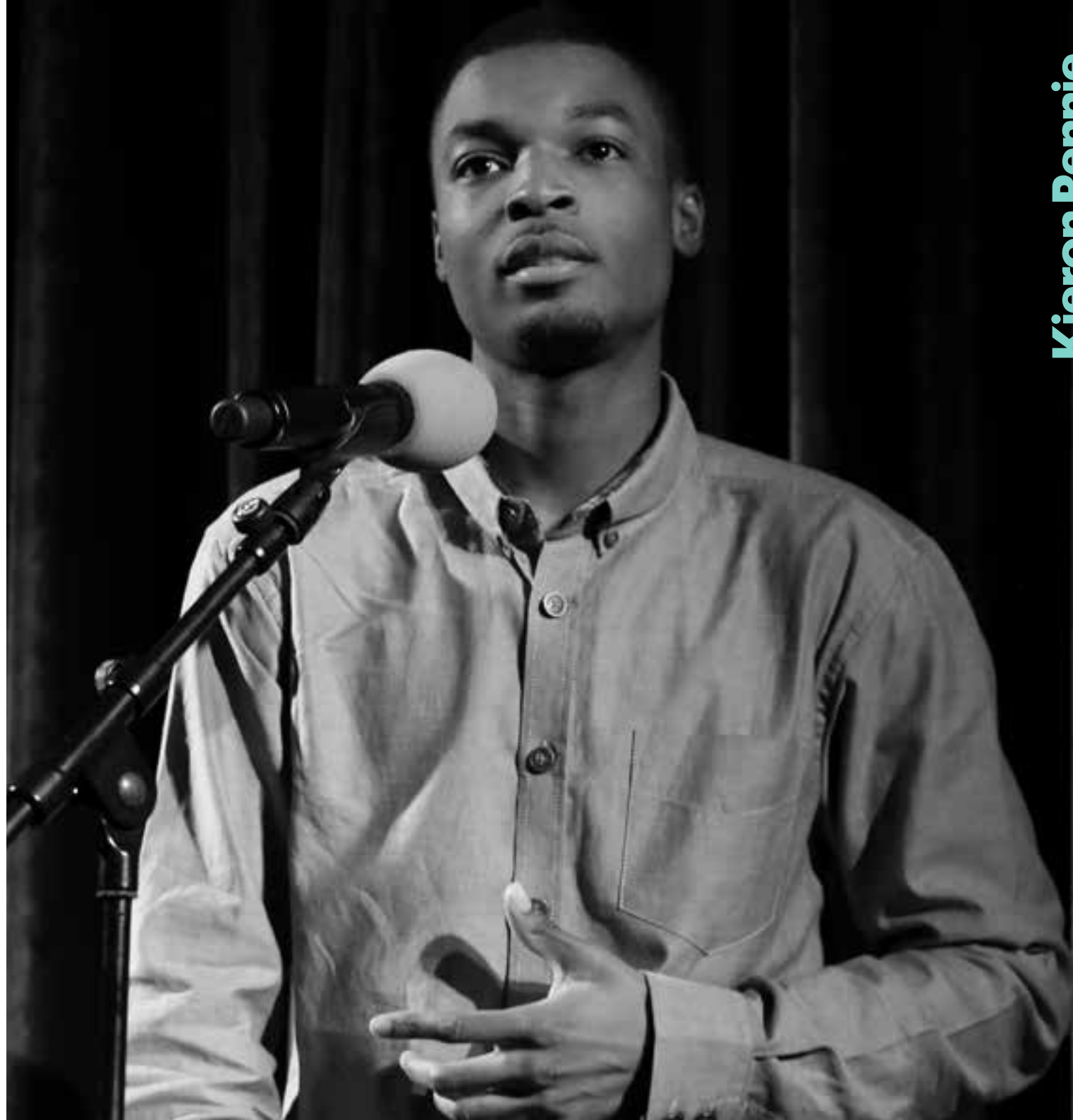
Tottenham

Your tears fell on hard ground
garments scattered,
you shivered.

Your skin inflamed
your skin in flames,
while
eyes grew grey.

You inhaled their anger
and
choked on smoke.

The world watched you
while your tears,
fell
silently
on hard ground.



Kieron Rennie

He Loves Me, He's Just Hurting

I stay like this under the weight of a raging man. I stay put
Because he kisses the wounds he has dug.
I tell people, 'If you saw his mouth, you'd know'.
I bury the dog when he kicks it to death. I clean the sick
After he has passed out, blaming my own body.

Our curtains stay closed.
He opens his mouth and the
Flowers hide in dirt.

Vollsmose

You were so much rage and I begged,
'Let me make you soft, make you something
I can live in', each time coming back
When I promised I'd never show you
My face again.

I watched my tongue around you.
I wanted you to admire the way I came in
Uninvited and slid my luggage
Beneath your bed.

You found me charming, a girl from a country
Choking on its own smoke. I thought
That you would finally love me
If I stayed quiet long enough,
That you'd call me yours.

You were everything my mother despised.
I called you 'home,' ignoring the way
My bones cried out against your cold,
Your hard mouth crushing all the brown
That came your way.

Habiba jumped from the 13th floor,
In your name, running from bloodshed.
When the men took her body away
The neighbourhood women gathered
To wash away what was left.

We thanked you.
Who else teaches survival
The way you do?

She didn't recognize her children anymore.
They picked up her favorite kitchen knife
Leaving markings on flesh
Until she could not stomach
It anymore.

All the police did was stand by her door
Waiting to catch the boys
Before they could run.

She stayed rotting in the kitchen
Missing the knife that would slice the meat
Into neat pieces.

You hurl boys who wear the same skin
At each other like slingshots. You ignore the mothers
Who have made a ritual out of mourning

And the way their faces stay wet.

When you became no melody
We all forgot how to dance.

When you stopped looking
I threw away the dress
My father bought to cover the hole
His absence dug.

You gifted me with anger
The house couldn't contain,
Elbows in every gentle space,
A cupboard missing its cups and saucers
And a wall bleeding.

Then you spat out a sky with so many stars,
Night after night, that I didn't mind
My body coming back to you.

I came closer
Begging for love.
My mother watched on
As your crushed me
In your jaw.

To Blink (Verb)

to face with feigned
ignorance,
to refuse to recognise

You blink to say cheers,
thanks for letting me go, blink
to say slow down, blink to say look out.
And when the sky turns dark as lungs,
you blink to show me out.

In my country, the lorries
have *Please honk* stuck on,
so you blink, I horn.

to look through half-closed eyes
as in a bright glare

they tell me Delhi blinks
every power cut

when the cricket nulls to a wishful
scoreboard
tube lights squirt out

voices un-amplify
and tune out

it's then I notice, we're right
in the middle of it

to twinkle, to glance
to flash on and off

Just one wish
away, one back-hand
palm to hold the stray
lash of a blink, to say:
this is what I want
from you.

to waver and back down
to spread tears across

One blow and it's gone.

Times Square – Halloween

Daydreams littered
like deadbeats
on the red line, uptown.
An autistic boy's missing
and everyone's relocated
to the first carriage
because a man twists
his hands funny
and his teeth threaten
collapse. The city's
on the stretchers,
hiding skeletons and ghosts
under coats.
So we spill into backwaters,
where motels blast TVs
louder than vacuum cleaners.
Behind us is a false daze.
It's not really dawning,
but outside we see the dawn.

The A4 – Karva Chaut

A cloud bars the traffic
like a false moon.
We have to get home.
My mother's fasting
and everyone's trying to locate
the next service station
because she's clawing
at my button holes
and the A4's spewing with
headlights. A tree
loses its standing;
my mother slips
beneath smeared window glass.
So we turn into a B road
leaving chinese whisper sirens
for fading sunlight.
Behind us, the storm breaks.
It's not yet nighttime,
but darkness shrouds the day.

Innocence

I hear she was mowed down by back alley clowns
Sharing the joke of the twenty first century.
I hear that she was dragged into love with a cigarette,
And ignored all the warnings
Of blackened lungs
Emblazoned in bright colours that covered his packaging.

I hear the word on the street is that she spent too much time online,
And the newspapers have got it all wrong.
The kids idling on bikes behind the place where the funfair used to be
told me she sold her soul for the minimum wage
A violent kids' game,
An R rated high definition DVD.

I heard from the neighbours that don't get along
And only talk when there's gossip
Or one or the other has parked wrong,
She died because she took too much advice
From a medley of underground rap songs.

I hear she was laid out on the floor in a flimsy white dress
By two and a half world wars, while minor conflicts danced around her.
I hear when she fell she sounded like a tower collapsing, maybe even two.
And the room imploded with the force of an atom bomb.
And that *Devil Have Mercy* was her funeral song.

I hear video games had a hand in her murder
But the only one I ever played was Tetris.
Or maybe texting killed innocence,
Maybe we were unripe for blackberries
When *LOL* became *Never Fucking Call Me*
And it was necessary for us to create the term 'cyberbully'.
Did somewhere amongst those magnificent cables
Writhing like snakes in the garden of Eden
We as a species lose our freedom?

Or did it start before that, was innocence crushed
The first time that man sparked a fire
And then used it to light his brother ablaze
And marvelled at the warmth that it gave him?
They say the indoors stole our innocence
Locked it away behind bi-fold doors and Venetian blinds
Until we all became nervous to venture outside.

My innocence was like a cereal box.
I still thought it was half full, and there was enough for one more bowl
Until one day I woke up and there wasn't.
I know a boy whose innocence was like a smile punched out by a fist.
Turning him sour and purple where cheek and knuckles kissed.
I know a girl whose purity was a mayday parade
A dimple that lingered long into adulthood.
But still through her fingers it slipped in ribbons of sinlessness
And its parting was all the more painful.

Why Don't We All Dance this Way?

I saw a man dancing the other day
His dance was a walk,
But it sang as it passed.
His footsteps were balanced
On a tightrope of serenity,
Heel and toe either side
Of the cracks in the concrete.

Slipping into each step,
As though commencing his matinee.
It was more graceful than any waltz,
Or ballet I have ever seen.
And he looked at me as if to say
Why don't we all dance this way?
As the limbs of life gather us in
Why don't we feel happy to see them?

He stared through a window of pity at us
Mere mortals.
Still walking in a lolling fashion.
Yet to discover freedom's tune.

And I looked back,
Through a doorway of sadness
Unable to step over the threshold,
Constrained by the branches
Of what I have built
In my own efforts to make myself
'Happier'.



Illinois

After Sufjan Stevens

Your name follows you around
like my home town
or the cack-handed love
of a bipolar mother.
Illinois, you owe me a dream.
Legs broken, spitting from my bedroom window.
You spun when Jade visited
after the suicide locks had been retrofitted
(and I pretended to be asleep
because that's what lovers do).
You belong to her now.
In a clown costume.
In a business suit.
Clunking along in headphones
at eight fifteen in the morning
on the northern line.
I vomited into my hands
when she had gone.
I breathed greedily at the gap
allowed at my window.
My hands were burning
& you felt like a feather pillow
pressed against my face.

Specular

When you say 'you' you mean me, I
said quietly to a mirror.
You replied 'I
can count myself on one hand'
if I can just let go of you
If I can just let go of you
I can count myself. 'On one hand'
you replied 'I
said quietly to a mirror
when you say you you mean me.'

Light/Gold

You're kerosene, phosphorous, friction.
Yellow teeth, sunken cheek, wrinkles before their time.
You live in domestic bliss with wives' ruin
and are quite harmless after the first few shots.
Or so my mother tells me.

Unprovoked, jealous.
A cigarette to calm down,
Dad's spitting image.

White Cliff Country

In town

Your time is tied between
childcare and intoxication.
It becomes more kids, more coke,
more broken bottles on kebab shop steps.
Before you vow to vote blue to keep out
the real threat to community, in front
of the Prince Albert, Crown and Sceptre,
slurring your philosophy into ignorance.

At the port

You swipe on and secure your float,
check the load, the morning weather.
twos a fag with that one stewardess,
watch her smoke wash away the cliffs
and castle lights no longer of attraction,
your hand a tourist in hers.
At least while we're on the channel.

At sea

'Are you on all day? Yeah me too.'
'I can't wait to get back to Dover.'



Harry Wilson

Living in the Ozone Layer with Major Tom After He Lost Ground Control

It is possible to be an atmosphere away from someone who uses the same hallway mirror as you. In a house of five, only me and my sister live with a man who temps as an astronaut. He knows my sister too well. She wears black every day and I'm glad she attends so many funerals but there is only so much you can learn about resin beds, umbrellas and pipe-bomb sing-alongs, those take-her-life anthems she writes in her diary and stashes under her bed, with rebel thongs and cigarette tins that are only opened when she drags on new experiences of nothing. She'll know how to sky-haunt on a curl of ozone, witness the world with a distance, numb to cracks in her ceiling where the astronaut fell through. Every morning, he asks permission to breathe our air and polishes his glass face in a mirror, never noticing the shampoo cornflakes in his hair, like he dropped breakfast inside himself coming into orbit and forgot to wash. His reach-hands pylon the sky. *It's an emergency*, he says, each light-bullet hole a power outage to fix, so there is no longer too much to cope with. He begs me after sunsets to turn the light pollution out, so he can count and scratch into me all the stars he has left to save. He has eaten toothpaste all his life and his smile reminds me of the mirror I ate to gain reflections but now, I try to hairdress fruit because it is the only way I can eat sun. Every night, I wake on the moon to watch the clouds striptease the Earth, peel back the rivers, so I can drink in the view. I spend day hours killing graphic soldiers hoping to learn what it is to live, slitting walls with the days I have missed, wearing the company of others as a palm push. I trip on violins everywhere because the air is so highly strung, my feet of horse hair can't sweep violent dust up in this place, my moon, an atmosphere that I can compress with shrink talk, pills, the kites I have anchored to my attic, my smile I have embedded in asphalt and as my faults float, tattooed in sign language on a Zeppelin with a funny accent, my descent will be weekly ground control lessons with a woman who designs human beings. I need to practise waking up on the earth. My sister knows the same secret, but never lets her voice breach the ozone. I learned how they faked the moon landing the day the astronaut crashed through my roof. He knows me too well.



Antosh Wojcik

The Novelty of Flying has a Strange Odour

'What about that smell?' she asked. I told her it was music for landing planes, a trombone hum stinking the atmosphere so it coughed lightning and turbulence, so all the belt signs flick on and mothers cram their children into airbags, bracing for plummet. A Ryanair stewardess would announce we made good time and my watch would shout as planned when the ejector seats and loose shoes tumble into the ocean they'd call a mattress, an averted disaster. I would laugh for television,

say, 'All of this was done to impress my Father,' who might play swift elevator swing as I climb the light staircase with her, she who smells sounds. She asked if I'm a nervous flyer and handed me a palm of wine gums. Her son told her not to trust people who watch aeroplane wings, his fists of Transformers crashing into her lap.

When I was picked up at the airport I called everyone Dad, apart from the one holding my name on a card. I saw those who could have lost something, the policeman entering their lives, explaining death to the dogs, their last relatives in the world. Duty free sold me sticks for calm. I ignored cancer on the box, told my plane-watching Dad that I just want to cover the smell, when you crash-land back to a runway, humming with that rubber laced heat you hear like orchestra pits are a bed of roses.

How to Witness the World with a Distance

**Barbican Young Poets
2013–14**

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Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning

Barbican Guildhall Creative

Learning provides opportunities for people of all ages to engage with the performing and visual arts. Last year our programme involved 40,000 people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Our activities are designed to have a positive, lasting impact on everyone – a world class arts and learning experience. These range from the inspirational, such as the Big Barbican Adventure and the Big Barbican Workshop, to more sustained projects such as Barbican Box and DrumWorks, which enable young people to develop their potential as human beings, as well as creators and performers.

We work with schools and communities across East London to inspire, influence and create opportunity in some of the UK's most deprived boroughs. In partnership with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama we are developing dynamic approaches to research and evaluation in order to establish new learning theories and practice.

Creative Learning also offers professional development opportunities for artists and teachers that enable them to acquire new skills as leaders and collaborators across a range of socially engaged settings.

freeB

Aged 16-25? Love Film, Music, Art, Dance and Theatre?

Join freeB, our free membership scheme for 16-25 year olds that gives Members access to exclusive discounts and free tickets for theatre, dance, art, music and film, at *'the coolest arts place in London'* (Viktor & Rolf).

Members get monthly email updates about what is happening around the centre and details of the offers available coming up in the next month. We also announce adhoc tickets and offers through our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Sign up today and enjoy more at the Barbican.

barbican.org.uk/freeb

Interested in becoming a Barbican Young Poet?

Barbican Young Poets offers you and other emerging young writers the chance to create, craft and perform poetry and spoken word.

Led by internationally renowned poet and performer Jacob Sam-La Rose, this is more than just another poetry workshop - it's a community of emerging poets, designed to push your creative abilities to new heights, build up confidence and encourage you to give and receive real feedback.

Exploring diverse aspects of writing and performance, you will draw on your passions, personal experience and the sights and sounds of the venue's rich artistic programme to develop and showcase your work in the Centre, and at venues across London.

The Barbican Young Poets' programme is for young people aged between 15 and 24. It runs every fortnight between October and March each year, and is free to take part in.

Applications for the 2014-15 programme open in July.

Email
creative.learning@barbican.org.uk
to find out more.



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