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# POETIC WINCHESTER

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a student-led project



## THE PROJECT

Poetic Winchester is a project put together by a number of third-year students from the University of Winchester. This project came about partly due to how our time here in Winchester coming to a close for many of us. It's designed to simultaneously celebrate poetry as an art form as well as commemorating our time at Winchester and the University.

30 Poems written by various students at the University have been put onto posters, each poster displaying a single poem. These will be displayed in various locations along Winchester High Street from the 18<sup>th</sup> March – 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019, and have also been brought together in this collection for easier reading.

## THE INSPIRATION

The project takes inspiration from 'Poems on the Underground' which was a public art project first launched in 1986 and showcased a range of poetry in tube train carriages across London. It has showcased over 500 poems since it started, and the idea with each one was to bringing poetic joy into everyday life. This was something we, as residents of Winchester for 3 years, wanted to replicate and recreate ourselves within Winchester.

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT

The project was organised and created by Daniel Lowe.

The project would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many high-street businesses and public buildings that allowed us to display the posters, so a special thanks to them.

And of course, the project's success is directly linked to the various third-year students who took part, it would be little without their contribution of their own work. See a full list of contributing poets below.

## CONTRIBUTING POETS

Anonymous  
Romina Barbera  
Liv Christopher  
KL Fleming

Tori Hamilton  
Kristen Hawke  
Lou Hect  
Daniel Lowe

Lawrence Nicolas  
Mollie Russell  
Ellie Sparks  
Aidan Waggstaffe

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Due to the nature of the project, the order in which the general public discover the posters and poems that are in the collection is completely random. Thanks to this, there was no hope in attempting to create a 'correct' order for the various poems that are a part of this project.

Therefore, the order present here is also randomised. Poems are not grouped by their poet, nor are they displayed in a deliberate order, in hopes of recreating a similar feel in this collection as the posters did in the street.

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## BFG

We first met on wolf-roamed lands. You cut through hellfire skies to find me, a child of 16, porcelain-boned and bed-bound. When you offered your hand, I only half looked at you, my mind was on the wolves. Their crematorium-eyes met mine, I saw how easy it would be to throw myself to them.

You picked me up and placed me on your shoulders. For three years you carried me, from jiggered wreck to man of a biceped mind. With wizzpopping glee, you guided me through the iron jungle, to those weight-trees where strength is found. Slowly, from my porcelain-roots new muscles grew, until you let me go.

I jump and hold the pull-up branch alone.  
Now, this jungle is my home.

You sit with me and we share our phizzwizzards whilst watching thunderstorms.  
As lightning breaks eggshell-clouds, I hear the wolves howl from far behind.

## SISTER SOFTSHELL

Crab people exist.  
I've met one.

She is a nun with dead eyes  
And a tea kettle voice.

When she abandoned her exoskeletal sisters,  
She shed her tacky shell on the sands of Boston harbour.

Still there she wanders, cold and flab,  
Insisting that the eyes are still watching.

## DRAGONFLIES DON'T BITE (USUALLY)

The female dragonfly fakes her own death to avoid male advances,  
She dive bombs, body spinning,  
Technicolour kamikaze, completing her dance of deception  
as she hits the ground.  
The male, at last, gives in,  
And flies away

I cannot convincingly fake my own death on a dancefloor,  
Cannot drop like a fly when I decline  
and the male says "why not?" or "give me a try,"  
Cannot shine jewel-tone, green and blue and purple  
in a post-mortem performance  
when I claim to have a mate and the male says  
"prove it" or "he doesn't have to know."

Why do I have to dance with death,  
This undignified dive-bomb,  
Before he understands that Neanderthal word  
No.

## TAPESTRY

My life is pulled threads twisting  
into a portrait of strained colours  
and incomplete lines.

Each push of my heart breaks  
the twine my fingers stretch to knot,  
until all I'm holding is split ends  
of lives I haven't got.

## BERLIN, 1961

He watches her jaw grow  
tighter  
by the minute  
hummingbird eyes  
never resting  
on his.

He wants to shake her free  
but she is made  
of glass  
her hands claw for air,  
but she pretends  
not to notice.

“What’s wrong?” he asks  
“Nothing.” she replies.



## I WANT TO FLOAT AMONG THE STARS

float  
I want to        among the stars

weightless  
I want to be        in the dark

fly  
I want to

**Choking** on the nothingness

*Crushed* by my insignificance

I want to find calm and oblivion

I want I m m e a s u r a b l e peace

I want to **sleep**

F o r e v e r in the heavens

Far from my troubles

float  
I want to        among the stars

## THE HISTORY OF MY LIPS

My very first kiss started as something innocent on the cheeks, the kind that shy but cute school kids give. We both blushed, then stole a peck on the lips for just half a second.

The second was a bit more of a mess, from two horny teenagers that couldn't get a room. It felt like fireworks, even if it was just the sparks of hormones going off in our pants.

The third and fourth kiss -especially the fourth- felt unfortunately small. I think we want these kisses to keep going for longer, because it's at this point in our lives we start to get a clue about what love, and loneliness, really is.

And then there's the fifth kiss that makes a one-time appearance. A sixth that we can't remember from a drunken night. A seventh that we might've slipped the L word to. An eighth we try not to talk about. A ninth a mistake.

A tenth a mistake.

A eleventh a mistake.

A twelfth a mistake.

A thirteenth a mistake.

A fourteenth a mistake.

Finally, we get to that one kiss. It might be the sixth, fifteenth or sixty-second. But, in all honesty, it doesn't matter the number the kiss is. As this kiss is the one that heals all past wounds.

And it will be a kiss that stays to see tomorrow's sunrise. It'll be a kiss that graces every scar and insecurity. And best of all, this kiss is the one that will say 'I do' to.

I don't pay attention to the number I'm on now. I kiss anyone in hopes they'll be the one. Or at least, their kiss will wash away the taste of yours. I wish to be Juliet no longer, I want this poison off my lips.

## SHOULD'VE GOT OFF AT BOTLEY

Black-out-baby-screams  
Coffee-spilled-on-new-jeans  
Wi-Fi-lost-businessman-cross,  
Energy-fading-time-robbed  
Pickle-and-cheese  
Naivety-and-greed,  
Should've got off at Botley.

Crackle-crackle-announcement-made  
Was-there-any-need-for-that-deadly-gaze?  
Chewing-gum-stuck-on-coat,  
Youth-laughing,  
Foghorn-like-a-boat.  
Stephen-King-Beckett's-*Ping*,  
Frustrated-readers,  
A-phone-ding-ding!  
Old-lady-rattling-wrapper-of-toffee,  
My, oh my, you should've got off at Botley.

"I'm-so-tired," "I'm-so-mad."  
"I'm-so-flipping, frigging-glad!"  
"I'm-late-for-school!"  
"We've-hit-a-wall!"  
"My-patience-is-wavering,"  
"This-is-so-cool!"  
Lights-flickering-time-now-a-tickering,  
Stench-of-sweat-sickening,  
Greasy-hair-flickering.  
"Where-are-you-going?"  
"Here-there-and-everywhere."  
"I'd-have-a-mare!"  
"Wanna-lift-share?"  
Heart-hammering  
What-a-bunch-of-softies.  
I'm now thinking I should've got off at Botley.

## TROUBLED WATER

the oceans of my mind are rocky  
ideas, random thoughts, and screaming words all swim by  
ready to be reeled in for this day's catch  
i stand ready on my makeshift raft of books tied together only with strings of hope and desperation  
i swing my net, yet nothing is caught.

it is probably due to how  
i'm using a butterfly net to catch whales.

## RESIDUE

You're like processed tomato sauce.

It's alright; at first you think, yeah, I can eat that.

Until you finish and a viscid fur hugs your tongue  
and plaque covers your teeth.

The sweetness turns into an undefinable aftertaste  
that remains even when I brush my teeth.

Your kiss clings to my lips like processed tomato sauce  
still there hours later,  
and I think I should've eaten something else.

## I ASK THE SHINGLEBACK SKINK FOR ADVICE

on love. He opens both sleepy eyes  
together, flicks his bright blue tongue,  
and says this:  
should you find a patch of sun,  
bask in it for as long as your dreams are undisturbed  
by clouds, never mind the busy, burning road that runs  
parallel. Your armour is for enemies only;  
shed it like skin for him.  
No mile is too many when returning to their side.  
Each visit summons the warm seasons;  
return again and again

## YOU LIKE MY DRESS SIZE AND I DON'T KNOW WHY

you loosened the tape measure  
I had twisted around my waist,  
softened the bruises with paint  
the colour of your eyes  
and told me that three meals a day  
was not a crime.

## QUESTION

Why? I asked. Why? I cried. Why? I yelled. Why? I screamed.  
Nothing, No response, No words, No wind, No sound.  
Why? I plea. Why? I want this answered.  
But why? WAIT! Why, why? There is no  
Reason. But there's still a question.  
Why no answer then?  
Why no solution?  
Why no words?  
Why no wind?  
Why no sound?  
Just why?  
Why?  
I...



## YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

I've grown up in a world of just one kind.

So many fall

short of the perfect find.

First, there's them:

stifled and strained by bureaucratic rules and  
diversion laws and pushed into any hole they  
wouldn't fit.

Then there's the rest:

who ached to be more than the paper  
of today and the letters of yesterday and longed  
for the god of tomorrow to light their way.

We all loved and

lost for the sake of propriety because we claim  
to be an advanced society.

We wanted yet couldn't have and went crazy  
searching for the hazy, impossible ideal.

We longed for straight lines and sunshine smiles and to be  
different,

always different and thought ourselves  
a lie.

We struggle to be who we have to be  
to quiet voices swirling across a fibre optic sea.

We hurt and cry as commercials  
meddle and Hollywood snoops and Victoria pries  
into lives that don't belong to them.

Now watch as we'll carry ourselves away  
until we become those we swore to hate, painted  
backwards in the mirror glass.

## TAKING A MOMENT

For that first mouthful of Iced Tea  
I listened to Tahbo  
with my eyes closed.

From this, my tongue caught the words  
“I took a flight on the wings of your prayers.”

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

NO		NO	NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO	NO NO NO NO NO NO NO
NO		NO	NO	NO
	NO	NO	NO	NO
		NO		NO
	NO		NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO	NO NO NO NO NO NO
		NO		NO
	NO		NO	NO
		NO		NO
	NO		NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO	NO NO NO NO NO NO NO

## A LOVE LETTER FROM PLUTO

she was a technicolour princess,  
wearing a wedding dress – once white – that's now stained with shots  
as she dances, bathed in neon light

made from moon dust,  
she had stars sprinkled in her hair  
and yet she was the sun,  
so bright she could blind you,  
and I,  
a mere forgotten planet.

## WEATHER FORECAST

I am rivers pouring down books  
Black ink suffocating robins

I am lilies shouting fuck off  
Rotten feathers in the sea

I am blue snow falling up  
Stars hidden behind screens

I am bright nights killing cats  
Bitter cake without sprinkles

I am corrupt seedlings  
Fish bathing in petroleum

I am soil mingled with led  
Factories drinking oak blood

I am strangled ducklings  
Bags filled with cotton leeches

I am waste bins sobbing acid  
Dreams sealed in soup cans

## THE NIGHT WE SHOT AND MISSED

We licked salt off our wounds,  
I invited you to drink tequila with me  
from the open night,  
to suck at the lemon-wedge moon  
cleansing the acrid taste from our mouths

but what crater-pipped rock  
could ever scrub you from my tongue?  
What arrogance to assume God  
would allow us,  
unattended,  
into his liquor cabinet  
without reprimand?

When I asked you what you thought of taking risks,  
your lips moved in silent reply,  
stigmata still too fresh for our hands  
to try to touch

but when the dust cleared,  
my head no longer spun  
from the napalm-heat of Mexican spirits  
and lives we could've lead  
the hint of gingerbread upon your breath  
was nothing  
but a memory  
too ethereal to bridge the gap:  
my shame filled the unbearable miles between us,  
mustard-gas of my own making;  
we choked upon it, wishing  
that we could still call it Love.

## MY BROTHER AND HIS SISTER

One minute after the door had closed,  
A three-week peace ended.

One minute was all it took.  
For us to be children again.

One minute after our parents were back,  
We fought once more

One minute was the turning point  
For us to return to siblings.

One minute after the house had four  
Once more,  
Our friendship ended.

# PIGSONG

She'll stack the shelves from 9 to 5,  
And curse at their behaviour  
When it's home time.

*Shall I leave? or shall I fight?*

*Routine wavers HERE...*

--- like blurry faces in the night ---

Then she'll say, "Oh, beg me to stay,"

Whilst they, in their opulence of polished, sculpted clay,

Will gulp down the blood of the inferiors of the food chain,

And impart upon me a decadent, crimson stain.

I'll watch and twitch at my desk,

Counting down my temporary contract. *When will I be next?*

My sister will say, "It's just a stepping stone, I swear."

But I won't need that. I'll need golden beans to spare.

Because fee-fi-fo-fum they'll chant, and throw me from the corporate beanstalk,

Into the seven sleepers roasting cave of psychotic human tea forks.

I'll end my phone contract and tip every penny in a plastic jar.

I'll turn to nature for comfort, even inhaling tar.

My lungs will dissipate into flakes in my pensionless years,

While they, in private Renaissance chariots will say, "Cheers!"

We'll all self-destruct like that bloody King-Kong,

And my adult head will beg me to conform to the muddy stain of corporate pig-song.

But it hurts to plummet

Like roots, through the travails of the underground.

Nevertheless, down here I can't hear the sooty filthy echoes

Of that beastly snorting sound.



## SPRING CAME EARLY FOR ME

and when I came to  
from the madness,  
chaos,  
that shook me to my core  
there you were -  
waiting for me with open arms,  
the scent of sunshine  
heavy on your skin.  
I stepped into your embrace,  
felt your healing,  
watched the kindness roll off your tongue  
and I began to bloom again.  
we grew,  
together,  
sheltering one another from the storm  
that raged on around us.

## CRAZY GIRL

This it to imagine she, the crazy girl, who dances auburn across autumn blue,  
your forestry snow-globes capture the spirit of the day  
as Wind lifts our blanket between its fingers  
only for you to bring it down in symphony.

We knit our hands between shards of grass  
and hunt their reflections amongst the clouds  
watching tightens ride dragons over planets;

a slow ballet that keeps us motionless.

This is to you, the crazy girl, as we wind dusk in together.  
Riding Wind close to its sails,  
proximity holding it back. Above  
tightens, dragons and planets  
become stars.

Under this natural hourglass we turn vivid  
two sounds against silence,  
until, under its weight

we close our eyes.

## FRIENDS

Spoons?

Spoons.

We wander in.

We take a seat.

Dim lights.

Dodgy seats.

Cheap booze.

Oh yes, we are in Spoons.

Jokes are told. Some people laugh, the others condemn.

Friendship can be seen in a glance.

Teasing and laughter.

Kisses and yelling to stop.

Secrets spilled, just like our drinks.

Joyous.

And outsiders? Well they just want us to...

...SHUT UP!

## SLEEPLESS

My mouth hurts.  
It is cracked,  
Splitting half of  
Everything I say.  
Words spill through.  
Statements.  
Phrases.  
Expressions that are  
Devoid of real existence.  
And I am pushed and prodded to reply.  
There is a haziness that now drops from my  
Voice box. A resonance that was not there before.  
I think you know it.  
But, still, you stitch insecurities into  
Illogical spills of thought,  
And watch my lips tear  
Until they bleed.

## SOLACE

There is solace in the stars,  
In my immeasurable insignificance.  
It chokes me,  
Oppresses me,  
Until I am weightless and free

There is solace in the moon,  
It is as lonely as me.  
Yet it stands bright,  
And proud,  
For all the world to see,

There is solace in the earth,  
In its steady support.  
It holds me,  
Grounds me,  
So I can be secure

There is solace in the wind,  
As it whistles through the trees.  
It brings change,  
And hope,  
All sorrow lost to the breeze

There is solace in the sun,  
With its relentless warmth.  
It is bright,  
And strong,  
And inspires growth

There is solace in myself,  
Within my bones and heart.  
Stubborn  
Unbroken,  
No matter how I fall apart

## OUT OF ODER

I have a confession to make.

I envy broken vending machines.

I want a sign like theirs around my neck.

No, sorry, you can't talk to me now.

I'm out of order.

The person you're trying to contact is not available.

I apologise for any inconvenience,

I'm too busy escaping anxiety-induced

fight with depression monsters.

Please try again tomorrow.

## BALLOON

I wish I could take out my lungs  
and blow them up like a balloon,  
inflate them full of crisp fresh air,  
release them on a beach in the summer.

I'd fill them with flower petals,  
make the panic smell a little softer,  
line their walls with honey  
so my breaths can taste a little sweeter,  
give me an incentive to keep breathing,  
in,

hold...

out.

Repeat.

## DANDILION PAVEMENTS

Sit with me in this city of  
concrete and glass, on a blanket  
of makeshift moss  
as we let grass surround our hearts.

Your nectar lips distract me  
from this plastic metropolis and the  
cardboard cut-out creatures it contains.  
Instead of suffocating on tin foil trash,  
we find small pleasures in our  
rooftop gardens.

Your pollen dusted hips create flower children,  
who we vow will not be born into concrete:  
Daisy, Lilly, Rowan and Rose.

So hold my hand down these  
dandelion pavements as we turn  
our faces to the sun, and bloom.

We will claim back our land.



## ESMERELDA

Her rooftops and alleys gleamed  
in refracted lights of white fire  
breathing in deceptive winds of tranquillity  
as they blanket  
the city in silence.

The sun, chased and teased by passing clouds,  
dimming and warming  
cheeks in their wake.

get down from here soon,  
it won't be long until someone  
spots my intruding figure,  
outlined  
and  
alien  
in the light of the travelling sun

someone will spot  
the slightness of shoulders,  
timid pose amidst rows  
of immortalized brothers and sisters  
gargantuan muscles hewn into rough stone,  
wings forever folded,  
frozen in silent prayer

Their clawed tips bound  
to their rooftops' edge,  
large haunches coiled ready to launch  
in defence should the city ever be in danger,  
or so they say.



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POETIC WINCHESTER

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a student-led project

## THANK YOU

At first, Poetic Winchester was simply an idea. Through hard work, multiple trips to the City Council regarding what was possible, the contributions from poets and aid of many people, it became what it is now. I just wanted to say a final thanks to everyone that was involved with the project's creation, as it would be nothing without everyone putting in the effort that they did.

