**Transcript of Audio version of Personism Leeds New York**

**By Pamela Crowe and Rebecca Faulkner**

This is the audio version of Personism Leeds New York by Pamela Crowe and Rebecca Faulkner.

Invitation. Life is a series of Mr Collins I find. They do like to write from time to time.

Poeticise on this and that. Suggest improvements I can make in my thinking or processing of events, they comment I may be misremembering. I do not correct them. What would be the point? I like people who reflect. That is my idea of a friend. Or who I extend an invitation to, to get in touch.

Unravel. Let me unravel the blue thread from the seam of the living room curtains. Let me.

I am important and can reach up small where the stitches meet my thumb. I can hide here

my reflection bruised glass, white cold at my back.Let me unravel, bored fingers skirting, my words eaten. I tug hard.

Length. Go and be happy with someone else. Not me. Go and do twee things with her.

I am that drawer my dad had. Heavy and hard to pull outin the corner, in the morning room, where the light hits. I’m full of sharp things, matches, opened packs, soft cardboard, nails of sizes, big long ones, and a tiny lamp the type that cookers need. A drawer of meticulous, insistent ways of measuring air and force and length. I’m half stuck open, at an angle and abandoned, contents tipped forwards and towards. There’s a blade with cardboard on to save you, and wall plugs the colour of tongue, a hammer that’s too heavy for most to lift and a ruler bent double, hinges gold and scuffed. It becomes a metre when it’s opened and the world expands with it.

Bees. I haven’t brushed my hair since you climbed through the fence, your orange shorts shocking against the smooth cheek of spring. We crushed foxgloves, sucked cherry lollipops, didn’t talk much. Kicked the dirt and practised kissing, our mouths sticky. Distracted you’d shout *3,2,1, readyornot!* and take off across the field in search of something brighter. You found the nest first, small but wide enough to push fingers into. I shook as the first one landed on my tongue, wings reaching for my throat, bees polishing the air black, a blazing happiness with its horizon of pain. Arms pressed against bark, you skinned your knee when you fell, dragging me down as the colony lurched stinging like a length of rope, their legion of quick bodies burrowing deep into my skin, chest humming inside my shirt where your hands were careless, gaping words I could not hear. We ran hard, striking at fear, *don’t stop* you said as my legs buckled. When you grit your teeth shook the final few from my hair, I could hear the sound of them doing their best to survive, and of you, trying to love me.

Alt. When my face didn’t work I used words to alt text myself. I couldn’t show what I was feeling, or the impact others had on me, so I described it to them, so they might not fear me – or erase me. With reduced space to speak, my mouth tight, eyes frozen. I would say: I am smiling now. I am laughing at your joke. I would say: my face doesn’t work, but I am happy. I am pleased to be here, with you. I am feeling. I have feelings. I am still here.

Cemetery Crush. Two sticks of spearmint gum, loose change in my denim cut-offs, I destroy

September with my pedals. Calves pump the hill’s lip, breeze blurs green then black. Braking hard at the cemetery where we always meet, you’re as vague as the avenue I crossed. I tuck my face in tombstone sharp. We never lock our bikes, you never say my name, but the dead are in my hair when your palms crush the petals. And babies who were loved briefly cry out six feet below us, rocked as the security light stutters; your mouth restless fumbling gravel.

I give up my skin leaving sneaker treads and silver wrappers with the dead who do not judge me.

Up from below. So long ago that I don’t know why it’s surfaced, I remember walking up the stairs and holding your hand. Long after anything had happened between us. When there wasn’t any reason to. I don’t know why I took it. The air beyond the bannister was recall blue

and everyone around us amniotic. I can feel bulb light. What can you have been thinking?

Letting me lead, as if I had power over you. Now I reach the top, look down you step up, stand over me. We let go. The last image I have of you and only a slight ascent. I’m back at the start and don’t want anything.Our tenderness that year, a triumph.

Low Tide. On the headland I am wading out, dragging my open wounds through surf, scrolling photos of you with her. Here she is, petite & windswept, urgently eating ice cream near the café on the pier with the memorial benches where I considered the loss of light, slivers of wood nudging my skirt. You told me about our east facing bench, bookended by rangy spires and staggering crows. We’d sit gently as days surged out, you’d fold my hair behind my ear to the peal of Sunday bells. But you turn up your collar, clasp her hand tight

 the sun giddy as I feverishly crop then save, imagine cutting into her vanilla thighs with a fork & knife to forget your fingers pressing my wrists where I destroy myself. I want to pick up the sea and show you how I’m made now, hurl you to the breakers with healed arms until you feel the rip tide tug beyond the buoys gouging you open on the rocks. I remove splinters from my eyes gaze at her pebble face on the screen, smooth & dull. My throat aches from carrying so much murderous language. I turn off my veins & unbandage my phone, swallowing great lungfulls of weather as whitecaps wait with open arms.

Grow. I transported to the V&A as my only contact with a place where people might be angry enough to take land and assume rights to land, and I got Kahlo’d in my visions which was wrong, and I could see only the land mass not the people or the continent. So meaningless these continents, so much so, I jigsaw them as one and displace seas. And faience.And all I could see were her legs, and her anger, and Frida in a suit, and that man she married who she amputated just as they’ll sever me. And backless on a back with eyes to sky she twisted octonatal in a sunken place. Spine.It’s a creature I invented from night times on my back when sleep lay dying thanking me for company. Nearly or already departed we gathered here to witness people disappearing. Whisper their names they will ephemerally gasp and suck you with them so stand backs, stand Back. They bury the dead with their children and one absorbs the other, back blended again, back to Frida, back to indescribable pain, back to land masses and safe choices served late in the V&A sun. Twelve pounds one way, their system one in one out. Tiles cold. So cold under foot. You’ll get lost trying to exit and wake up under one of her shawls. I did. Forty pounds in the gift shop, metro’d to death. Help me. Leave, grow.

My sadness is very particular. I hadn’t been crying, I’d been chopping onions and you happened to stop by unannounced and sat with the afternoon light behind you on the red chair by the stove. I remember your scarf wrapped twice around my neck on the Central Line. I held my swollen stomach, felt first kicks and fresh strawberries we bought, already softening. You missed your stop, so I waited on the platform, watched the feet of strangers, my neck warm and itchy like regret that settles. I used to save small relics, wedding rings and coppers for the fountain, death certificates and letters to unborn babies I couldn’t save. I tried to tell you the Cornflakes box was too tall for the shelf, dented where I push too hard to make things fit. When you closed the hospital door quietly after the doctor said it’s gone, when we ran out of milk, my hunger for things that are just out of reach.

Reprocessing. It took a few weeks, it could have been longer, the dates froze. The unearthing of unbeauty, of the unbearables. The bearables (lovables) being worn away, bored away to reveal the truer self. One less etched, more messy. More less. Anticipated by the retina before creeping eventually, lobally, to the brain, to the brow, where the seeing of everything sits, where things processed sit. Things over with. Things that were too real.

Chaplinesque. Starving inside cogs of steel, poor as a church mouse, I wear my clown face long, mustache coy, head cocked. I know humiliation, a distant foghorn, the edge of a barber’s blade, boots made from licorice. I devour piano keys the color of milk and soot believing each octave is you, whispering yes. Press a penny in your palm to stop the world, make you tune your radio to the sound of my voice. Call it a white rose as the screen fades. Call it hope.