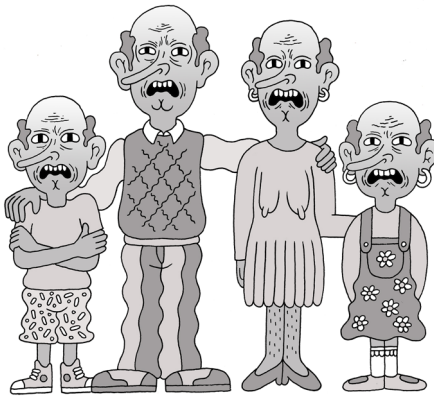


# Five Dials



NUMBER 27B

*Pedagogic Poems*

*Tim Cockburn, Heather Phillipson, Nathan Hamilton, Emily Berry, Olly Todd,  
Luke Kennard, Oli Hazzard, James Brookes*



## CONTRIBUTORS

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JAMES BROOKES received an Eric Gregory Award in 2009 and a Hawthornden Fellowship in 2011. His pamphlet *The English Sweats* was published by Pighog Press in 2009; his debut collection, *Sins of the Leopard*, was published in 2012.

TIM COCKBURN has studied Creative Writing at the Norwich School of Art and Design and at the University of East Anglia. He lives and works in Norwich. His debut pamphlet, *Appearances in the Bentinck Hotel*, appeared last year.

NATHAN HAMILTON runs Egg Box Publishing. His poetry and criticism have appeared in *Poetry London*, the *Manhattan Review*, the *Rialto*, the *Guardian* and the *Spectator*. He recently edited *Dear World & Everyone in it: New Poetry in the UK*, published by Bloodaxe.

OLI HAZZARD was born in 1986. His debut collection, *Between Two Windows* was published by Carcanet in 2012. He is currently researching for a DPhil on the poetry of John Ashbery at Oxford University.

LUKE KENNARD's second book of poetry, *The Harbour Beyond the Movie*, was shortlisted for the Forward Prize in 2007. His latest collection is *The Lost Expression*. He lectures at the University of Birmingham.

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Thanks to: CLINIC

Designed by: DEAN ALLEN

Illustrations by: SOPHIA AUGUSTA, HANNAH BAGSHAW, KYLE PLATTS, TOM REES, JOE PRENDERGAST

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## On Parenting Poems

First published in 1954, Elizabeth Longford's *Points for Parents* – a popular parenting manual typical of its period – promotes the old saying 'Mother knows best'. It was republished in 2008 (as *All in the Family: Parenting the 1950s Way*), with a foreword by her daughter, Rachel Billington, who advocates the same mantra in the twenty-first century.

Longford ends her book with a nod to one of the nation's best-loved poets, Christina Rossetti, encouraging parents whose children have grown up and left their 'domestic kingdom' to be 'secure in the knowledge that youth is still "a captive in thy chord. Let that chord be love"'.

Starting where Longford left off, we gathered eight young poets and asked each to choose a chapter heading from *Points for Parents* to use as a starting point for their own work. We were interested to see if we could reinterpret the archaic parenting manual and give it a new life of sorts. The results, gathered here, form an alternative guide to parenting. Mother knows best; poetry knows better.

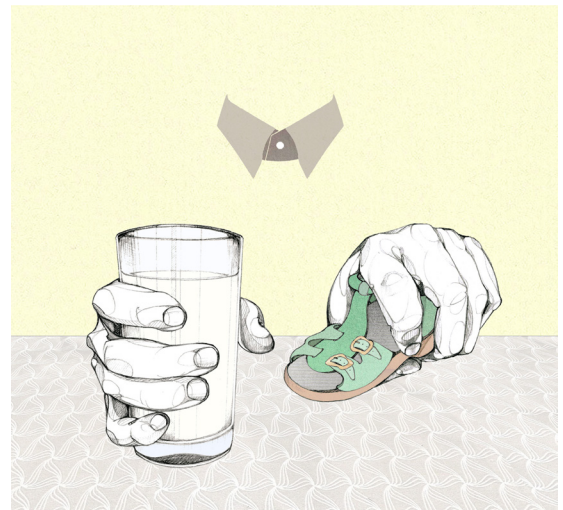
—SAM BUCHAN-WATTS

# In Praise of Children

## *Poem Immediately upon Waking*

I had a dream my two girls, grown up,  
with their intelligent eyes and nuanced, searching faces,  
stalked up to me at Christmas, or something very like Christmas,  
and their faces said, 'Dad, we're sorry it didn't work out with Mum,  
but we've forgiven her.' And I beckoned them come hither,  
and fond of me as they are, with that wry, faux reluctance  
best becoming intelligent women, they came hither,  
and my look said, 'So you should forgive her, girls,  
she's a marvellous woman and if we're being honest  
I should never have let her get on my bus in the first place,  
knowing what I know about Cockburns before me,  
about rocks melting with the sun  
and everyone getting under the table when the phone rang;  
I should have wound down my SORRY, NOT IN SERVICE sign,  
switched off my interior lights and driven straight back to the depot,  
but you know, girls, your mother was only cold like anyone  
and probably not any less selfish, and I was selfish too  
and I wanted to love and fuck your mother always;  
so I took her little ticket off her, which was furry from use,  
and she took my little ticket off me,  
which also was furry from use, and off we went.  
And we laughed and cried and mostly cried aboard my bus  
as it rattled along, just holding together on the faint promise  
of the sort of destination one hopes, upon reaching, to concede,  
with a wry, faux reluctance best becoming intelligent women,  
was certainly there all along. And whether it was or not,  
look at you two, you're perfectly wonderful  
and you've got the knack of living – that's all your mother –  
she hates that sort of talk too, but it's Christmas, girls,  
or something very like Christmas, and I can be as camp and weary  
as I please, and can't a man draw the loveliness of women  
around himself like sand if he wants to?' At which point  
their two boyfriends, who I knew in the dream were fond of each other,  
came in, each enjoying the other's company,  
but, it being late and they being men, wanting only really  
to draw the loveliness of women around themselves like sand,  
and my girls kissed my cheeks, first the eldest, then the youngest,  
and smiled at me, and I smiled too and my smile said,  
'Go to them, girls, it is to them you should go.'

— TIM COCKBURN



# What We Learn from Fantasy

– Belief in the inconsequential  
tabletop napkin dispensers that get our chins clean  
as we pull the moment to tatters

and cry that there is no difference  
between a face and a luxury item.

Both are in excess of thought  
which is not the brain's function which is action!  
Sure, the mind is not Raskolnikov napping,

though it is hungry and handsome.  
Almost nothing corresponds to what goes on

in its sprung-floor playground except the terrific certainty  
that days spew out like headlines  
through a web press as big as a building.

THEN A MAN IN A GORILLA SUIT HELD ME;  
*it was like deliverance from being a reliable citizen.*

Invention, it transpires, is contactless love-making.  
It is the saucy dream of toothpaste hauliers  
and the validity of oral hygiene. It is safe sex,

in some trendy positions, with the possibility  
of more gallant kinds of cheesecakes.

In Tokyo, in the year 2003,  
I overheard, the ground rolled continuously. Say,  
who among us doesn't care to picture

the architectonic plateleture that chafes beneath  
the surfaces on which all people are shaken.

– HEATHER PHILLIPSON



# What Are Good Manners?

‘The hand that bites is the maternal hand,’  
reads the Doctor. I made him a comic for his birthday  
and this is the first thing the dog protagonist says.  
I’ve learnt everything I know from the Doctor.  
When he asks if I want to talk about my mother  
I say, ‘No, thank you. My mother is dead. It’s classic.  
It means I’m both precocious and heartbroken,  
but that’s no excuse for bad manners.’ The Doctor  
doesn’t care about the heart. It’s academic.  
If I tell him I’ve missed him, he says, ‘Love  
is the bloom on a problem, and must be cut out.’  
In my one memory of my mother I am filling up  
her belly-button with shingle on a beach in Brighton.  
When I told the Doctor he mused, ‘A dog bites  
the hand it knows,’ and, ‘The fruit will swallow the tree.’  
He’s recording me on tape so he can sell my story  
to a documentary maker when I’m famous. Today  
he’s making me list everything my parents ever gave me,  
like 1) A rabbit; 2) Medicine; 3) An interior feeling  
of shipwreckedness. While I list he reads my comic,  
chuckling. He doesn’t notice that the last page is torn off.

— EMILY BERRY



# A Teenager in the Home

and they've ran the path to our red door  
where there's a ghost at the threshold;  
they've stormed in  
and it may well be a bloody miner  
to break the black knight  
hanging. And the scaffold may be a cage  
on your brother's chessboard  
within itself like the cage I want to cling to  
and they've graffitied the mirror  
chained into the dark. No choice in your proceeding  
on your dresser  
style. You will not change the pilgrims  
and you've barricaded your bedroom door  
in the angle of their prayers. O elegy  
and now the night-doctor is on his way  
in sunken scaffolds screaming in the glass  
because we've woken your aunt  
what you cried out as you hung there guillotines  
and she says you need  
the last earth rock on earth,  
your stomach pumped.

— OLLY TODD



# New Problems

Paul was a happy, outgoing child and a champion swimmer. He won so many races and gained so many badges that there was no longer any room on his swimming trunks – so I attached a long tail to the rear hem onto which his new badges could be sewn. With that tail he looked like some kind of bird of paradise when he swam – and Mr Kendrick, the physical education teacher, told me I should be proud.

However, when Paul began studying for his A-Levels, everything changed. He took to playing loud, inconceivable music at night and wouldn't turn it down when we asked him.

'What do you do if, when you ask someone to do something, they do not do it?' I asked my wife, Amelia. It was a mystery to us both.

It seemed cruel to take Paul's music away, but we were forced to do so because he wouldn't use it responsibly. We locked his records in a safe and disconnected his room from the electricity supply. Paul wouldn't speak to us for a month after that and he started going around pissing on public walls in broad daylight. This meant that instead of knowing him as a happy, outgoing child and champion swimmer, everyone just knew him as the boy who went around pissing on walls.

He now wore his swimming trunks on his *head* – and the tail, which still held so many badges – room freestyle, zoom backstroke, 1km crawl – flapped in the breeze in a manner I took to be personally insulting. He would disappear for days on end and come back with a pale face and a collection of glassware – glass swans, glass cats – which he'd stolen from neighbouring villages. As anglers are to fishermen, so Paul was to burglars: he would break into houses for sport, stealing only a valueless ornament and returning it the next day, undetected. When we questioned his behaviour he would use American insults such as 'Blow me!' or 'Bite me!' and stamp up the stairs to his room.

It was my wife who suggested removing the staircase to Paul's room and at first I dismissed it as a silly idea. However, when Paul was arrested for mugging an old woman for a packet of tissues, which he intended to return to her later that day, I decided that enough was enough. 'You can sleep under our roof and eat our food,' I told him, 'but there's no way in Hell you're using our staircase. Do you understand what I mean by that, Paul?' I said. 'I mean that even if this were *Hell*, your using our staircase would be out of the question. Even if we lived in *Hell itself*.'

We had the staircase to Paul's attic room removed altogether and Paul had to come up with a new way of reaching his bed-

room. He did this by constructing a ladder made of knotted-together blouses.

'See,' I said when I saw him sitting in a pile of old blouses, constructing a ladder. 'You can accomplish great things when you put your mind to it.' Paul told me to go fuck myself. Next he piled up some old boxes of books, thinking to attach the ladder made of knotted-together blouses to the gaping hole in the ceiling once he had scaled the books. However, when Paul reached his bedroom, another surprise awaited him.

We had had all of his possessions cast in bronze and disposed of the originals. His sheets and bedclothes were now bronze sculptures of sheets and bedclothes on a bronze sculpture of the

*Thunderbirds* bunk-bed he had slept in since he was a child and champion swimmer. His half-finished glass of water was now a bronze sculpture of a glass of water – although this was one of the less effective pieces in the installation as it was no longer discernible as a glass of water, just a dark brown metal cylinder, solid at one end. The Bernard Cornwell novel he was reading was now a bronze sculpture of a Bernard Cornwell novel face down on page 102. 'You can eat our food and sleep in our home,' we told him, 'but don't expect us not to pull crazy art installation stunts like this once in a while.'

We noticed significant changes in Paul's behaviour. He became extremely withdrawn and started eating less. After some weeks, Paul developed a rash on his forehead – which we recorded on a report form and faxed to Galaxy Med, explaining to Paul that we had been spiking his food with a new kind of anti-malarial drug. 'You can live under the shelter of our roof and eat with us at mealtimes,' we told him, 'but don't expect us not to use you as a case study for big pharma.'

And, well, that was enough. Paul broke down that very night and said he was sorry and that he knew he'd been horrible and he hated being unkind to us and felt ashamed of his behaviour, but that those feelings of shame only served to make him angrier because he didn't know how else to deal with it and he'd really like to become a champion swimmer again and could we, please, replace all of his bronze sculptures of possessions with normal possessions again?

'We'll see,' I said. Later that year Jennifer was born unexpectedly.

— LUKE KENNARD



# A Later Stage of Discipline

Tonight, under the threshed light  
of this concave city, I will underwrite  
your hand-scribed manual of confidence-tricks,  
imported unnamed tins  
of warpaint 'sunset blue', or whatever  
Ponzi scheme the papilla

of your charisma might issue. Being providential,  
your pince-nez was preserved  
against the cataracts and hurricanoes ramming  
against what, I'm afraid, has been downgraded to a wig-wam;  
but that's probably just today talking. Tomorrow,  
or the next day, or whenever we're free,

we might gift you  
an oasis diadem in gratitude  
for your lifetime, and pen thirteen juicy  
zebu in a tomb of gingko trees  
to enshrine the legacy, known by all  
to be worth the love of sustained labour. It will be official,

then unofficial. And vice versa, of course,  
or even something worse. This garden, say, that currently bears  
the name of some pale vessel of Paul  
has a rosy fragrance, and benefits from transparent walls.  
The brochure says at dusk vast  
clouds of green butterfly scuttelate

the green air; plus it's patrolled  
24/7 by liquorice-smoking heavies dressed  
in ill-fitting zoot suits. If you can't mask your concern  
that your quarters will be ransacked  
while you doze, we advise you speak to the resident pescatarian,  
who come rain or shine

will yammer with anyone with a smattering of Greek or Russian  
about anything parched under the sun.  
He's pleasant enough as long as you don't, under any circumstances,  
ask if something might not change, or, worse,  
require something to stay the same. If your shellacked  
throat makes breathing laboured,

orderlies in pressed uniforms will be there  
at the press of this white button. They  
are trained not to look you straight in the eye.  
They will check with a spirit-level  
if the bed's as flat as you say.  
I can guarantee that something happens almost every day.

Remember, things will never be as bad you say.  
Regardless of public holidays,  
funerals of loved ones, or the arrival of the circus,  
I want you to be assured  
of the fact that, under no circumstance,  
will any of you ever be left alone.

# The Importance of Being Father

Body-in-womb  
A babe in arms,  
it couldn't be;  
hardly a thing

No feeling then  
warranted here.  
Take all this time  
this impotence

against your fear,  
Give deference  
not yours to make.  
Not long from now

This is the void,  
against which you  
For her, for them,  
speak warding prayers

and anti-body.  
actual, blood-quaint,  
the child is quanta,  
to feel or be hurt.

and no forgiveness  
Be sure. Be watchful.  
as your talisman,  
as power itself

your fine emotions.  
to this decision,  
Make yourself useful.  
you may be needed.

this is the vacuum  
must be on your guard.  
as much for yourself,  
in this waiting room.

— JAMES BROOKES

