

from a young man's headset  
in the row in front came muted music. He thought how loveliness  
happens before we can cry out, frame words, excuses. There, returning,  
its propositions spreading like a fan,  
we find we're caught, buckled in as if by starlight,  
unwilling to move a finger out of fear  
of shortening by so much its time with us . . .

## ROBERT HOUSLEY

### ENTHUSIASTIC STUDENT VOLLIES WITH BRUCE

Someone  
to the right  
served  
the on-stage verbal entertainer  
(a surface showman, a private retainer)  
an ethical inquiry:  
"When you hear others  
recite your poetry  
badly  
does your . . .  
*stomach churn and head reel*  
*in utter disgust*  
*at wayward intonation*  
*and Sex Pistols rhythm?*  
*Alas no –*  
*hyperbole*  
*a trifle too sweet.*

. . . heart sink  
a little  
at the misappropriation?"  
Bruce,  
with the expertise  
of a deliberate ground-stroker,

replied  
“Nnnot really.”  
A nervous silence resounded,  
the audience pores  
exuding  
tennis-player perspiration.

*Love-fifteen,  
they all thought.*

A vicious reiteration  
deep into the service court;  
Bruce,  
slightly amused,  
reacted gallantly —  
a master of  
grass, asphalt, clay,  
earnest revelation  
his forte:  
“I’ve had no formal . . .  
and they’re well rehearsed . . .  
So . . .  
Actually they’ve all . . .  
Consequently,  
no,  
nnot really.”

*Love-thirty,  
the onlookers mumbled.*

Bruce  
was in retreat,  
tucked behind  
his profound eyes,  
when it came:  
a final,  
courageous  
attempt at point-scoring satisfaction.  
“Does it,  
you know,  
slump,  
a bit?”

“I must admit,  
Yyes.  
The occasional inflection . . .  
Yyes.  
Not in agony  
though,  
with relief.”  
Bruce  
joyfully tossed  
*Sometimes Gladness*  
high above their heads –  
They then  
shook hands.

## BETTINA CUMMINS

### QWERT

Dear quick brown fox  
how boring it must be  
jumping over lazy dogs.

I am a little Olivetti  
neat, elite,  
carriage and character impeccable.  
I'm all keyed up  
wearing my ribbon with an air.  
Now is the time for you and me  
to go to the party.

You may call me Olive or Oliver.