

**Wilderness House Literary Review 13/1**

*Gareth Culshaw*

**THE FIRST TIME WE WENT TO THE FOOTIE**

That first time we went to the footie.  
Singing names we didn't know of,  
chanting words we had never heard.  
In between passes we twattled  
like a nest of chicks. A bottle of coke  
in the back pocket, a fiver for a burger  
and chips in the front one.  
The away end sang but we never  
caught a word. Our ears to tuned  
to what we were spitting into the air.  
Someone bought a programme  
and it was rolled up like we didn't  
want the day to escape our memory.  
Our minds were in the interlunation,  
as we grabbed thoughts that might take us  
to the next stage. The skies we had  
dreamt of were coming towards us now.  
Stars we had sent to the unknown  
and hoped they would open up adulthood  
between the hours of school and home.

**PALMISTRY IN THE SKY**

We sat on the bench waiting.  
Then the clouds moved  
and someone walking above  
the skyboards made it crack open.  
A rumble followed and your eyes  
forgot to blink. We shuffled  
ourselves to shoulder each  
other. He was somewhere else,  
checking train times or talking  
footie. But me and you sat  
like passengers. The sky lit up  
again and showed the lines of your  
palm right there above my head.  
I sat in hope your life line  
was infinite.

THE PENDULUM TICK TOCKED

In the hallway a pendulum  
swung itself. A slight tick-tock  
fell from it. It speared the silence  
when we sat in the living room  
as the time slipped between us.  
Your eyelids closed then sprung  
back up like someone quickly  
opening a garage door.  
I sat watching the hands  
pass each other on the face  
of a clock. You were retired now.  
Your herring fish silver hair  
and tanned forearms, rested.  
A tub of dog oil waited to clean  
your knee joints from sea air  
and drains. The room expanded  
itself as we shuffled thoughts.  
Sometimes the words we should  
have said came back at us  
in winter winds.