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### [Episode 10: Liv Wynter \(March 2015\)](#)

Host: David Turner – **DT**

Guest: Liv Wynter – **LW**

Transcript edited by [Martin Pettitt](#) – 06/06/2017

#### **Conversation**

**DT:** Yeah, hello, my name is David Turner and this is the Lunar Poetry Podcast and this time I'm in New Cross, in South East London, and I'm joined by this leery little fucker Liv Wynter. As always, we're going to start with my guest giving us a short introduction into her work and life.

**LW:** I'm Liv Wynter, I live in New Cross in SE and I study, I'm in my third year at Goldsmiths doing fine art. I write poetry as a... As my art form, as my practice, and I guess I'm like interested a lot in hip hop, I guess, more than maybe poetry but... Yeah, I write. I write as my practice.

**DT:** We won't hold that against you, by the way. You can stay, it's all right.

**LW:** Yeah, I write as an art practice, I guess.

**DT:** Yeah, so I was going to start with... I find myself a lot now starting with like disclaimers that I know... But it's obvious I know people that's why you've been... So, Liv and I have known each other for a little bit from poetry and performance art nights, and we met a few weeks ago to discuss the possibility of recording the podcast together. So, during the chat I might refer back to a few things we've discussed before. The majority of what we hope we can talk about today will be for the first time.

I only mention it because we try and keep things as spontaneous as possible but I am reading from a script. As I say, we're keeping things spontaneous, it's printed out in front of me but I haven't asked Liv to prepare for this other than the chat we had before. But now that's out of the way, I have a question [INAUDIBLE] where do you feel like... Where do you feel, if at all, do you fit into the poetry scene?

**LW:** I think it's quite... I think I personally as an artist find it quite hard to locate myself with a definition because I guess definitions are made of like, you know... Words have definitions and definitions are made up of like rules. So, I find it really hard to call myself a spoken word artist or a poet because there's things to do with those words that maybe I'm not so into. I kind of like... For example, sometimes spoken word nights, I find can be such an uncritical space or a space where like... I mean it's great that anyone can get up... I feel like I'm digging myself a hole already and I've only been talk for about two minutes.

I don't know if I'd call myself a spoken word artist. I feel like it's got a lot of like theatreiness to it that maybe I'm not into but also like, you know, there's class issues with... Now with spoken word poetry different from like when it started and it was like, you know, beat poetry and stuff like that it's kind of... A lot of people I know that are spoken word poets now are, I don't know, middle-class drama students.

**DT:** OK, that's interesting, because of course I mean you... That's obviously based on the people that you've met. The whole scene is huge and [LW: The scene is massive] I assume you know more about the scene in London than anywhere else in the country. I'm not sort of... I'm not actually questioning your opinions, just kind of [INAUDIBLE] in this kind of setting. But do you find your problems with being defined as a spoken word artist... Do you feel like that exists in your own... Are you putting that pressure on yourself or do you find other people putting that on you?

**LW:** I think probably every day someone will ask me what I do and I... Every time I have to be like, well I'm an artist but I guess you could call a poet or like I do this and I'll do that. And I guess I have to argue quite a lot to defend why what I do is art and not... And not just like

poetry or something, like it's art, it's an art form like... And why it deserves... For example, a lot of my shows are in exhibitions and galleries as opposed to poetry slams.

**DT:** That's where we met wasn't it? At a performance art night down in Camberwell run by James Massiah. And I thought your stuff fitted really well, I thought in that scene... Seeing it with Paul McMenemy, editor of [Lunar Poetry](#), we were down there together and we both agreed that it would be really interesting to see you then in a proper formal poetry...

**LW:** Yeah, and your night was my first... That was my first poetry night.

**DT:** Yeah, which I said to you, we spotted you first, so... What do they say, when you blow up, is that what they say, you blow up? [LW: Yeah, when I blow up, definitely] Yeah, don't forget us. You see I don't... I personally didn't see any difference between how you fitted in at the arts night in Camberwell or our night in Waterloo. Did you feel like it... Did you feel like there any barriers to... Or any differences?

**LW:** Yeah, I mean, maybe like I felt... I like a rowdier night I'd rather be in the pub than in the poetry slam. I think that people at that art night like they were shouting and cheering and people were like really into it. It was more like reactive.

**DT:** Well, Paul and I discussed actually that night how we don't know many poets that would've have been able to get up on that stage, in front of that audience, because it was pretty lively, wasn't it?

**LW:** Yeah, yeah, they were rowdy as fuck.

**DT:** But it was good. It was a good atmosphere. Actually, I just want to go back to something you mentioned earlier about how you said that you felt that poetry nights traditionally, well, the ones that you've been to, are not critical enough they're too welcoming. Would you like to talk a bit more about that?

**LW:** I feel like just because someone... I try and compare it a lot to like what I'm doing as an artist and if someone comes in to a space like... Where everyone is showing work and someone shows something that is really shit, we will talk about it and we will talk politely about it and work out what it is that this work is missing or why it's not achieving things that it's supposed to be achieving. Whereas I find poetry like you're just going to get a clap and a pat on the back because you've got up. And as an artist that's not really a very productive thing to experience because if no one's going to have a conversation about how you can improve then you're relying on yourself to be your own critic.

And sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes you miss the massive things that you're not getting across like maybe a poetry night isn't the space for that but I feel like if you got a bunch of poets in a room, why aren't you talking about poetry? I guess, maybe, or like talking about what you're been watching, you know?

**DT:** It never fails to amaze me how little poets talk about poetry.

**LW:** Yeah.

**DT:** In a critical sense, you know. I think... because I come from an arts background myself and I actually agree with you on those points, pretty much. One thing I would say, I think artists are a bit quick to forget how they felt the first time they were critiqued and how awful it is. And you get used to that, when you go to art school you get used to the critiques and you realise that it's not an attack, it's not a personal attack, it's just someone's opinion and really actually they're doing it to help, you know. And because that system doesn't exist in poetry I think it's just, at the moment, is just terrifying for poets because, you know, quite often they're bleeding their hearts out, you know. It's not always done in a particularly interesting way. [**LW:** Yeah] But it's a difficult and emotive subject, isn't it?

For a lot of people, you know, to suddenly... A lot of them don't want criticism [**LW:** No, of course]. I mean I think.... I don't know how you feel about this, I've often felt that it would be good to have a defined open mike scene where there is no criticism. You are allowed.... You know, in classical music you have recitals which are often early in the morning and there's an acceptance that there will be mistakes because people practicing a certain piece of music in order to then go on to do a concert. You don't pay as much to get in and there's an acceptance that it might be a lower standard performance. And then you go on to have a higher standard. Whereas you're completely free to then have as harsh an opinion as you want. And I think maybe that... I don't know something like that you know because you can't start trying to open mike nights and bully people. Well, you could...

**LW:** I never would but I guess I'm thinking like in relation to experiences where I performed recently, where people do shout at you or like, you know, there is that intense involvement with the crowd like you'll know straight away of something you said worked on not. You know, like you get it from the crowd but I guess like sometimes, even at a poetry night because we're all being really respectful which I guess is probably good. But you can't even tell really from the tension in the room or like the sound of people.

Like I've done lots of performances where I've done a poem which I know is quite funny but maybe I've gone on too early in the night and people haven't laughed yet because they're not drunk and I'm talking about dicks or something. People don't like it, you know, and people won't laugh because it's too much of a like precious kind of space instead of a space where we can like... Because I get the catharsis of like getting up and pouring your heart out. But to do that... I don't know every week like without ever being told anything about it seems... I don't understand how that is like a productive thing especially if you want to be like the poet.

**DT:** Well, it was actually like through discussion about these subjects that the podcast started. It was because of this lack of discussion and it isn't actually... I think what people miss the point of is not... When you say critique that doesn't mean criticism. Even if you're studying art, having a critique of your work doesn't mean you're going to be criticised. It just means other ideas are going to be suggested to you. And that's the thing we're not... I don't think any of us, and I say us as in we're reading poetry and the discussions we have, none of

us are suggesting that we should heavily criticise poets. But, yeah, there should be more of a discussion... You should be more able to approach people when you're...

**LW:** And like it does sometimes, if you do try and do it, it fucks up. I tried to speak to that dude at your thing and it just... It was not appropriate for me to do it at all. But like that's what I mean like you get really used to being patted on the back, you get really used to it the moment you start doing poetry. You get really used to people being like, well done, like not even, it was good, like, well done which is really different. And I kind of quite quickly like... I don't know, I come from a performing background I used be in bands and stuff, I'm used to being on stage, I'm used to being shit. I'm used to being bad and having flopped sessions like...

So, I kind of really quickly got quite distrustful of this like pat on the back but then in an art space people will give me critique, people who I've never met will come up to me and be like, I loved that first poem, didn't like the next one, didn't think that went down so well. Like people will do that and I will grow from that but you're right I guess I've got pretty thick skin and I don't mind when people tell me they don't like stuff or that they think things should change. And maybe that's because of growing up in that critical space or something.

**DT:** Yeah, but also can just be [INAUDIBLE] some people are more or better placed to take shit from people, whereas some people are just much more fragile.

**LW:** Yeah.

**DT:** I've got a question here and I just suddenly realised it doesn't read... I don't think it makes any sense to me. What am I trying to ask? Is there a difference between not having a place or not... Yeah, I know what I mean. Is there a difference between not having a place and not being welcome, you know what I mean, like you could... Do you feel that you're... Yes, that's what I'm trying to ask, do you feel that your style is just too different at the moment to a lot of nights or you physically... Has anyone made you feel unwelcome because of what you do?

**LW:** No, I think that the problem lies in that me politically as an artist, deciding where my work's going to go. Like being invited, for example, to do decent poetry nights at the Amersham Arms, I won't go to the Amersham Arms because the bouncers are homophobic. I won't perform there, like there's various places and venues that I'm... like all artists, people, that I'm like, no I won't work with that person, I won't work in that space, to make a point. Like, you know, they're my words I have to stand by them, I have to stand by where I say them. There is no point going and doing a feminist piece of poetry in the Amersham Arms where they hit girls in the face before like... What's the fucking point?

So, in that way I guess I'm pushing myself slightly away from the circuit but there's also like tropes of like poetry like talking about poe[try], talking with poets, like... A lot of my friends are like, you know, they'll describe the nights as like spiritual and stuff, which is fine but it's not me and I don't prescribe to that like... That sense that like us as... All poets should all just be like totally carefree cool guys like... I don't know, like I don't really know what that's doing. It seems a bit blasé to take that standpoint.

I've never been made to feel unwelcome anywhere, I've been made to feel a bit like a token, like the leery working-class chick. Quite a few times, and I've definitely been asked to do shows where it's been like, and art shows, where it's been like, oh we're trying to represent like people that are misrepresented, we'll get Liv in. Because like, you know, she's obviously very working-class and...

**DT:** Yeah, well, that's the thing, isn't it? You've got a very definite look and, you know, the background stuff in the way you sound the way you talk. Yeah, I mean I don't really know how I would deal with it because I'm not very likely to have anyone pay any attention to me and I deal with that being pigeonholed in that sense but... Yeah, it's a difficult thing between using things to your advantage, isn't there? And being put in a box, you know...

**LW:** It's about self-awareness, it's about talking about it, like because, you know, people for the same reason are like, you know I'm a female poet who looks the way I do, like covered in tattoos, like making quite like obviously feminist poetry, that's a massive box in itself, you know. And it is really easy for people to like sweep me... Could just sweep me under the rug with that like, you know, just like leery feminist stuff. But then there's something in... I think in the poetry that stops you from doing that that maybe comes from like my reference points being different things.

But yeah it is really easy to get pigeonholed. But if you if you embrace it... I've got this thing coming up with Vice and I know that they've just asked me to do it because they just want to like... I don't know, point at me a bit. But like I know that, so I'll probably write a shitty poem about them and then they'll have to film it and put it out and it would be really funny. Like I think that sometimes you've got to take that attitude as well because every platform's a platform at the end of the day. And it's what you make of it I guess.

**DT:** Well, you're only going to be pigeonholed if you allow yourself to be.

**LW:** Yeah, that's why I think I'm reluctant to like call myself certain things.

**DT:** And do you find that's why you feel... Is that another reason you feel more at home in the arts?

**LW:** I feel like I can defend myself better in the art scene because I know the things I care about and I know what my work's about and I know the works that I'm interested in, in like an arts space. I know like where I stand politically but maybe with poetry I find it harder to like work out what other people are about as well maybe sometimes like with... I don't know, I don't know. I don't know. It's definitely a question that I can't answer yet.

**DT:** That's OK, we've probably been over that enough anyway. Maybe we should have a poem.

**LW:** OK, cool, well that's funny I'll do this one;

## Fucking Artists.

Congratulations because you've successfully fucked an artist, and well done you, you managed to find the working-class chick. I think that means, in some way, this pussy actually left you more authentic. I think it means that when we was going at it quite relentless, yeah I was supposed to be thinking about politics or censorship. I was supposed to be thinking about my personal subjective needs but I was quite distracted trying to remember whose fucking in bed this is. Congratulations mate because you just fucked a poet and your contribution to the arts, yeah, is almost heroic, you know, by going down on me you could be going down in history as someone Liv Wynter once cussed out on an EP, you know. You're not really smart enough to actually objectify me but you are arrogant enough to think that you are inspiring me, which quite frankly I find tiring G. You have to realise you don't even exist in this poetry, you are only represented in the generous flows from me.

Now do you trust me? Am I a reliable narrator? Or am I just a bitter ex-hater, debater, dictator or an active infiltrator into your fucked up behaviour. Congratulations. You fucked a creator, painter, political campaigner. Nah. Break it down. We were just fuckin strangers. Congratulations though because you've managed to fuck a creative and you've managed to impress the boys you're with by going on home with the leery chick. What did, you think you could tame this scary bitch, please stop taking all the fucking credit. Yeah, I said it. Because the people that think oh these words are to them, they got it twisted, these are my words that I wrote, I fucking listed, it would be a push to say in any way you even vaguely assisted. So, don't take my eloquence and use it in your own defence. All you did was get me incensed at your own expense which is incredibly fucking easy to do. By the way pissed off and rude, yeah that's how I spend the majority of my day, these witty one liners Bu, they're going to happen with or without you. So maybe don't look into to my poems for any clues or resonance of you. Well done though because you just fucked a rapper and you've unlocked your special move yeah and it's this [Slap sound] the slow clapper.

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**LW:** Sorry, I've got flu, I feel I should explain, I'm fluey right now.

**DT:** We've all got the flu, everyone's got shit dripping out of their face.

**LW:** It's gross isn't it.

**DT:** At least I haven't got any jewellery catching mine. I really like that poem, thank you. Yeah, I think that's probably the first one you did actually at the night in Camberwell.

**LW:** Yeah, I think it might have been.

**DT:** And it was brilliant because it was in front of a room full of artists saying, yeah, yeah, yeah, because of course that's not us.

**LW:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**DT:** Yeah, so... I'm just trying to work out what we've already talked about. Yeah, yeah, we'll move on and actually from that we'll move on and talk about the subject matter of your poems. You know, like you said, your work comes from a very strong feminist root often dealing with issues around body image and sexual physical abuse, subjects that you've had personal experience of and you've also got close friends that have been through the same thing and you write about them. I just want to ask you about how you... And also, you mentioned that not wanting to play certain venues because of homophobic staff and stuff. How do you reconcile that stance with your obvious influences from hip hop, which most people would accept as being mainly... There's a view that it may be misogynistic or homophobic. And also, it can be [INAUDIBLE].

**LW:** I mean, I've been into hip hop for a long time and I've been a hip hop head forever like... There are massive problems in hip hop that is very obvious. I will also say I don't think like a standard white art school feminism is doing fuck all for people getting shot in the street in America like 16 times by police officers. I think that you can be... I couldn't necessarily ignore the fact that a lot of the stuff I listen to is very anti-women but like a lot of... But like racism is a massive issue, I think is what I'm trying to get at. And like the implications as well, like feminism as well, is like about trying to avoid like these binary issues and like the pressures of being like a black man are fucking insane. Like the pressures of getting out of the ghetto or like living a certain lifestyle, getting money through like white supremacists. Like society which tells you like violence and abusing women is what's going to get you away from this like horrible place, like that's unavoidable. And hip hop is a product of that.

And like I kind of think that that's really important like that these people have these voices and things will catch up. bell hooks talks about it really well because she's like, you can't just hate like the black man for making his music when you've told him it's his way to get out of like a... To get out of the violent space and then be pissed off like when that happens so... I can't deny that hip hop is... Like can be fundamentally anti-women. But then also like it's changing now, scenes getting bigger and changing and there's big gay hip hop scenes now, there's female rappers now that are doing really well. I mean there's still only ever supposed to be like one female rapper which is Nicki Minaj at the moment. But like, you know, we're still obviously all made to...

**DT:** Is she the one?

**LW:** She's the *one*, yeah. She's the one at the moment. But, I mean, hip hop is fucking amazing at the end of the day.

**DT:** Do you think that question comes more from a lack of understanding of both hip hop and feminism, what hip hop is now and what feminism is now? Because people... I would assume, I would assume that people have got quite an out-dated view of both.

**LW:** I think it comes from a place of people thinking that to enjoy something means you're not critical of it. You know, I love hip hop, doesn't mean I don't think parts of it are bullshit, doesn't mean I like, you know... One of one of my favourite songs that I get up and dance around to in the morning is A Bitch is a Bitch by NWA. It's just this dumbass song, it's just them just slagging off women. But they're saying stupid things like she'll talk about you behind your back and tell your friend she's fat and it's like it's hilarious. It's so ridiculous in its like hatred. But I'm critic[cal]... I can understand that it's fucked like I can grasp that so...

It is like I love grime music, grime music is like my obsession. And people want to give me so much of a hard time for it but just... It's coming from a different place. Like maybe, you know, I go to... My school is full of middle-class people who would look down on grime because they just see it as like a violent nasty thing. But like that comes from institutionalised racism and classism like... And if you can't... You know, it's really easy to just dismiss it all as a thing and that's kind of a bit stupid.

**DT:** But we also spoke recently about... You mentioned that you probably don't hold these... The feminist views that people would assume you hold and that you have argued with tutors in the past about the stance you take over your feminist views. Can you talk about that?

**LW:** Yeah, for example, so like did Don't Flop recently the rap battle thing, which I'm sure we'll talk about later, but like one of the verses in that, the first verse, is all about me having sex with a girl and there are certain people that would say that's anti-women. But I would say it's not because I haven't described any... I haven't done anything without someone's permission, I've spoken respectfully about having sex with a girl, which is something I've done. And it's not anti-women to be vocal about stuff like some... You know, like some people still don't want women to talk openly about having sex or like wanting to have a one night stand and not giving a shit. And like as long as everyone's happy in that situation like sexually then I don't think there's a problem with that.

I think as well, people do sometimes... I used to always say like I write rap. I wouldn't really say that anymore because of the implications of like what rap is and like.... I've got a lot of friends who are rappers who are like, you fucking don't. Like, and that's fine I respect that but I used to say and people had a real problem with me saying it because they were like well, like you said, rap's anti-women. So, but I also think that there's no correct way to be a feminist. I would never say to someone like I don't think you're a feminist because you don't follow what I think is like a feminist stance. It's a... As a word is so loaded but it's also so important that everyone who feels they can use it just uses it because there's no correct way to be to be it or to associate with it. I don't think.

**DT:** Just come back to the hip hop thing again being not really about the subject matter but more in... Have you found... What you think the response has been to your poetry so overtly referencing hip hop, have you found it to be positive or negative?

**LW:** It's funny because it can separate crowds sometimes like some of my early stuff that I don't do anymore, I used to not write poetry really, it just used to be like more monologue stuff. When I was doing that that had a lot of like actual like bits where I'd say like, I'm listening to my headphones and like I'd rap over people's lines and stuff. And it could really split a crowd because some people would get it and be like, what, and that would have a little moment. But a lot of people wouldn't get it. I don't know like... I think that... I think that people also understand the importance like a lot of my work is about taking up spaces where you're not really supposed to be. And I think using this style is part of that, you know, it's not really a style that was ever intended for me to use as a woman.

So, it's quite fun to then own it like that's why I like get really into it. Even though I don't think Nicki Minaj is that good, I think she's a badass because she just writes all her own shit and is like making millions off it. And she's taking up a space that people don't really want her to take up because we're really used to like... Even like generally speaking like poetry or painting or something they're very like male dominated spaces like I think it's important to go and be like, well, fuck you I'm here.

**DT:** Yeah. I'll be a bit cheeky here because we've talked about this before and you know it's not really my opinion what I'm going to say but... So, what about people who say, well rap isn't poetry so what the fuck are you doing?

**LW:** I say, that's fucking stupid isn't it, is my response. I say open your fucking eyes a little bit. No, I mean I get it like... When I was... I went away, I ran away, to Devon recently because I was sick of the city, my friend was staying in Devon, so I ran away and he's a rapper. We were talking about open mike nights, poetry nights, and he went, yeah, bet I could get up and I'd like drop some bars and look the way I do, and everyone would fucking go crazy. And I was like, yeah maybe you're right, maybe we should do it. He was like, yeah and then he started rapping and I was like, oh, I don't know. Because it was quite sadistic you are talking about beating people, oh, I don't know like... But the standard of... If you get rid of the context, the standard of what he was writing, his word play, like his ability to write... Actually write something sick, was incredible.

I think people could learn like... I did like a poetry workshop thing with this other guy who writes and we were like just everyone did like a reading and kind of wrote stuff together. And people were like picking up on like, I don't know, rhyming patterns in some of the stuff I was writing and they're like, where did you hear that? And I'm like in grime like, you know, like they used patterns that have come really like, they've generated these rhyming patterns that haven't spread anywhere because no one wants to really listen to it. So, like that... Like people should steal that shit, definitely. But I mean, I don't understand, rap's poetry.

**DT:** Does it involve listening to the young person's music?

**LW:** Yeah, I don't know that you'd get down. But I get what you mean, that other thing we were talking about, that I've been going crazy about, is like my stuff written down doesn't make any sense. Any sense because of all the hanging on a note or like you know...

**DT:** Yeah, because that's what we were talking about wasn't it, but actually when we got round to like actually having a proper discussion about it was that thing that, you know, if your rhymes are relying on you extending a syllable or carrying a double beat in with the sentence, how does that look on paper? But that doesn't actually mean that you can't have poetry that only exists in spoken word form because that's another discussion. It was just a way of looking at it rather than it being an attack on rapping, that wasn't what I meant, it wasn't that because, you know, I have listened to a rap song.

**LW:** Have you? Have you really? Where did you find them?

**DT:** My friends older brother made me listen to them. I didn't want to listen to them.

**LW:** Did you hate it?

**DT:** He made me listen to NWA. No, no, it's just it's... I find it's a hard conversation to have sometimes people do reference rap a lot. Is that outside? Is there a chicken next door, a real chicken? Sorry I just got really distracted, there's a chicken in the garden next door. We're in South East London and there's a chicken next door.

**LW:** I know there's a chicken.

**DT:** You heard it as well. What was I saying? [INAUDIBLE] I was talking about the NWA and I heard a chicken clucking at me. What I was going to say was, it's hard to have this discussion with people who reference rap a lot because they, I think, feel like they've being attacked a lot by poets for not being good enough. And I don't think really that's the... I think that happens a lot....

**LW:** It is the class connection. Rap has come from a working-class ting and so did poetry but poetry's migrating now and it's doing its middle-class bougie shit, which is fine. I should probably stop being so dismissive of it. But, you know, poets can kind of like, I don't know, someone like [Saul Williams](#) who's like an amazing poet but it is also a rapper and he kind of navigates his space really well between the two. And like, you know, hip hop heads and rappers like [Nas](#) is like, Saul Williams is the guy. And then there's also like poets that [Kate Tempest](#) who is like, Saul Williams is the guy, he navigates in that space really well.

But he kind of also was there when poetry was changing and forming so he had a really good way in. And he went and did like rap at poetry nights, you know. And like they went crazy about it. But like yeah like I guess now because also you do have a split. Like I go to... I maybe don't go to as many poetry nights as I would go to a hip hop cipher. And watch that or all like battle rap or something. Because that's much more my style. So, I don't know, I guess like the class aspects of it... it's quite easy for like a bougie middle-class poet to be like, well, it's just rap and like a rapper to be like, well, fuck you it's just poems.

**DT:** Yeah, I think what I find odd is that there is a divide. We are all just saying words out of our mouth.

**LW:** It's just words, isn't it, at the end of the day.

**DT:** I mean, the decision does come when things are on paper because you're looking at them in a slightly different way. But that doesn't mean that there can't be an overlap between the two either. We're going to move on and talk about image [INAUDIBLE]. Before we start that maybe we should have a second poem.

**LW:** Yeah? OK, bear with me if this sounds whack. This is called

### Outward

Normally I combat it by shopping, at ebay at 4:00 a.m. those things that make me whole again, you know, its posters mainly of Nikki or Kim. But for hours I just sit, scroll, skim, because, fuck what I spend I've got this image to mend, hair to extend, I've got some budgets to try and bend and it's funny isn't it? Or not. This ability to be impulsive on things like clothing but I can't decide what to eat for like three days. So, I don't. And instead I'm emptying my fridge again. Gone off food next to an empty bottle of gin and yes I'm aware of the cliché but I think I'm comfortable in them. Inside that cliché, school, work, play that's me, that's a cliché.

Along the way I'll get maybe a gingerbread latte. It's my favourite coffee by the way, and I hold it tightly in my hands but in my head I start to pray like, please, please let this thing taste the same. let it live up to its name, let it not feel the shame of when I bring it to my lips only to put it down again, let no one who is close to me realise this game of pretending to drink or eat. Because these are things that my body needs and it is not exactly stress, you see. It's kind of more boring than that. It's damp, it's flat, it's not exactly stress, you see. I don't know, frustration maybe? Because no one's fucking texting back to me and yes I'm aware that I'm the one who is acting erratically, I'm needy, I want time, attention. I'm greedy, touch, body heat physicality, feed me, I'm craving something explicit. Yeah I want it explicitly. Not you. Not that. Please just come and stand next to me, laugh. What? Am I not being funny? I said laugh.

What use to me being funny, once more before you I am betrayed by this body because I'm always taking up too much space and I really want to be small, delicate, elegant. I want to move with grace, I want to elevate, I want to transcend from this negative space. I want to be real and fake, I want to be intelligent but I'm talking in fucking clichés again and I know I sound stressed but I'm not stressed. And it feels like... It feels like when will you stay up all night from the glare of the Mac light or your TV's been on for hours, I don't really remember why. I'm aware of this air around me, inward, outward as I sigh.

And yeah I am aware there's consistent nothing by my side but I'm missing, you know. Interchangeable girl, guy. Tick another box off on a binary life guy.

Stimulating conversation maybe your best and emotional high but shouldn't I see something reflect when you look back into my eyes man, you look bored, and you look tired. Maybe the artist in me feels that I should leave you just a little bit inspired, you know. what, are you tired? Because you know you don't really say much, and you just let me stumble around those words whenever I'm drunk but I'm trying real hard to learn to outward this inward funk, you know, outward because that's what you're supposed to do. You're not supposed to fucking carry it around with you. What, because it's a feeling? So it's something supposed to be out of my grasp. Better shit I want to ask but I can't put this fear of overstepping some kind of mark, outward. Only I've fucked mine up because mines become a projection and I know it's my defection, it's too much affection with injections of aggression, disconnection, rejection. They are the natural selections.

I'm just lost. And I'm sorry with no sense of direction making massive mistakes in my signal detection, constant second guessing. Conversation with friends is just time for dissection, hoping someone will make some kind of generous interjection, before I say something fucking stupid to bring up a mention and I know I sound stressed. Maybe I'm stressed but I'm learning to be outward. I just became overexposed. My body doesn't hold any meaning now and I've gone all fucking Hito. And as the light continues to shine I continue to absorb that globe, it leaves me distorted, translucent. I got this shit stagnant flow. I'm tripping over my syllables now, I Can't seem to get these words out. I'm tripping over words like, Oh girl flow, what? Haven't I got any good poems to show? Where is my sense of development though?

I'm lost in this vocabulary. You leave me nowhere to go and these dictionary definitions are just leaving me unsatisfied, with all of these adjectives I keep clawing at, when I'm trying to find the tip of my tongue is sharp, deformed and unkind. And how will it ever say anything delicate when to put a fucking metal bar through it? It's like these words, you know, these words they're not heavy. They're just weighted and they fall flat to the floor before they get to you, which leaves me here still unstated.

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**DT:** Thank you very much.

**LW:** That Must have been very different than what you've got printed out, was it?

**DT:** Yeah, yeah, I've got the poem printed out because it's always awkward when you don't realise the poem's finished but also to reference back to. But, yeah, it's quite a different version. And actually, going back to this idea of when you drink the gingerbread latte and you pray that it's going to be the same as it was before... And this idea that, fuck, yeah, you're looking and you've got the Starbucks cup or whatever, and you're hoping you haven't just bought the cup, you know, and it isn't just an image. Do you think we are all worried in some way that artists that we love are only an image, you know, and do you think

there's a fear that you are going suddenly discover that there's nothing behind it? And if there was to be nothing behind them is that a problem?

**LW:** I mean, I'm obsessed with pop culture. I spend the vast majority of my time watching Keeping Up with the Kardashians. I've got posters of Kim Kardashian all over my room, in my studio.

**DT:** My dad asked me about Kim Kardashian the other day, so she has gone like proper mainstream.

**LW:** Oh, dude, she is huge, you know. That's my chick but like she's amazing. Like it would be very easy to argue that she's vapid or like there's nothing there. But obviously that's impossible, I think personally, to be a human to be entirely vapid. And also, I'm not going to go on a Kim rant but she's basically a genius. But like, I dunno, for example when I was writing my dissertation, I keep talking about Saul Williams but I love him. But I got this book by him he'd written and I read the little bit at the beginning where he is talking about himself and he just came across like such a dick and I was so upset that this dude that I loved just sounded like the most arrogant man in the world.

Especially when his like poetry is so like real, you know, and then he just sounded like just so arrogant. He had a whole page where he just drops everyone's famous name that he's like met. And I was like, this is shit. There's a pressure to live up to... Maybe there's a pressure to live up to your image but also you put your image on on purpose, right. You know, there's a reason that I perform in fake Chanel, head to toe, every day. Like, you know, is part of the performance for me. And I would argue with most people it is. And like aren't we all performing, I hate to get all arty on it but like we're all performing all the time.

**DT:** This brings us nicely on to the next question actually, or the next topic if you could talk about your previous body of work as a performance artist and your alter ego.

**LW:** OK, you're outing me right now. So, before I used to make art... I used to make art... Before.

**DT:** Until you learnt better.

**LW:** Until I learnt how to not, yeah. I made art that was about wanting to be a rapper. It was really funny like now when I look back at it I'm just a series of like self-fulfilling prophecies. I like decided, hmm, I want to be famous what can I do? Sex tape, rap, rap. I decided I wanted to be a rapper. Started making loads of fan art about myself, start making flyers for fake gigs. And t-shirts like everything like crazy shit. Made loads and loads of CDs, that was just blank that I like sold and made money off and they're just blank CDs and people would still message me and be like, I love the EP. And I'd be like, there's fucking nothing on it, but like that's just part of it.

And I used to go to exhibitions with security guards and like turn up at like some little exhibition somewhere. Which is like all full of people that obviously know me but obviously people that don't as well. And like turn up with security and bottles of like fucking

champagne and like scout around the exhibition, no one was allowed to talk to me. Then I'd go and like Myspace would be like a set up merch stand with of all the merchandise on and I'd have a PA, no one was allowed to talk to me unless they asked my PA to have a photo. But it just went a bit weird and like there was lots of people...

**DT:** Oh, it then went weird.

**LW:** Yeah, and then it got weird. But yeah, we'd do stuff like we just turn up, dressed up, and try and get into places with security guards. Because my friend is an actual security guard, they let security guards in, but to people in the queue it looked like I was getting in, even though it was my mate being like, you know, come on fucking bring your shit in, whatever. But it was really funny. And I think like... And then, yeah, I was like, I'm going to be a rapper, I told everyone. Loads of people thought I was a rapper and then my tutor was kind of like why aren't you just being a rapper. What is this that you're just not actually just doing it? I was, I don't know, like this is really important that I don't make music.

And then I... And then summer happened and I worked full time I was working like sixty, seventy hours a week. I didn't have time to make any art, I didn't have time to go to any exhibitions or be anywhere like that work was very much about being in places. And then I started writing rap and now look at me. But it's funny like in my first year of uni Kate Tempest did an artist talk and we did the questions and I asked her if she wanted to battle me because I knew she used to do battle rap, and she was like, no. And I obviously didn't do anything at time and like I just did a battle rap the other day and then in my second year I was pretending to be a rapper, and then I just started like all these weird self-fulfilling little prophecies. It was a really bizarre way.

**DT:** That brings us neatly on to talking about rap battles.

**LW:** Yeah, shall we?

**DT:** So, yeah, I keep calling them hip hop arguments, but they're not are they...

**LW:** That's hilarious, a hip hop argument.

**DT:** Or a contretemps whichever you prefer.

**LW:** I like it. Yeah, shall I explain what it is?

**DT:** Yeah, do that because... I think most people... because obviously it's quite prominent in the poetry scene because of [Mark Grist](#), and some people before. Although he doesn't battle, does he? But he does [**LW:** He bigs them up a lot] bigs them up, yeah. But obviously Count of Monte Cristo or whatever his name is, he's big on the scene. And his videos on Youtube are massive, he's had millions of views. Yes, so if you but... But for those who don't know maybe explain and tell us what you do.

**LW:** So, [Don't Flop](#) is an organisation that put on events of battle rap which is three rounds, one person against the other trying to make the other person look like a cunt,

basically, for X amount of time. They blew up kind of along with Mark Grist, there was a battle with [Mark Grist and Blizzard](#) that went viral. And then actually like they've been working alongside [King of the Dot](#) which is massive in Canada, same thing, battle rap. But now it's fucking massive and there's incredible battlers that are doing incredibly well and the standard like main channel videos are getting like fifty to a hundred thousand views like easily.

Yeah, but it's... I used to love battle rap, I absolutely used to love it, I used to watch it every day religiously. I thought it's a best thing in the world. I love watching people make people look stupid. I think it's great but kind of as time went on you kind of realise there's only so many jokes about like homophobic, anti-women, rape, violent jokes that you can listen to before you're like, this is whack. Yeah, so I recently went and battled [Pedro](#), who's a big deal. I got respect for Pedro ish. No, I think he's all right, he's good but like he... I got offered to battle him and I said yes straight away because his bars are really anti-women, generally. Like one of the things that I always find about battling is I respect a battler more if they just have a go at the person in front of them, not their sister or their mum, or their best friend standing behind them. Like in battle rap, you know, you're putting yourself out there and going, come on let's fucking go.

So, have a go at me not the person around, whereas Pedro doesn't really ever attack the person in front of him. He kind of just attacks their miscellaneous others, around them, which I think makes him a bit of a pussy in my eyes. So, yeah, I want to battle him, they let me because they thought I was going to go up... When I applied I sent them some feminist poetry, so they just thought I was just this leery feminist with no sense of humour. And they wanted to kind of sacrifice me to Pedro, but then I got there and I was pretty fucking good. Yeah.

**DT:** And my favourite story about... Sorry, my only story about rap. We'd seen Mark Grist at a comedy night and he explained about the first night he did it. And if you want to come up with... He didn't realise you needed a battling name. So, he punned on his name and came up with the Count of Monte Gristo. The guy misheard him in the noise and introduced him as the Cunt of Monte Gristo.

So, for the whole of the night he was the Cunt of Monte Gristo. No, but it's quite interesting that you mention that because I know I've seen tweets and video messages between [Scroobious Pip](#) and Mark Grist. And the reason Scroobious Pip wouldn't battle him, or get involved, was because of the inherent homophobia and misogyny and he didn't feel like he... But it might be because you're a female that you feel better placed because you're not actually going in and be part of it, you're going in and trying to fight against it in a way, aren't you?

**LW:** Yeah.

**DT:** Whereas Scroobious Pip is going in as a man and just being part of the boy's club, isn't he?

**LW:** But like it would be easy for a male rapper to go in there and do something that should get up but they don't want to. My problem with battle rap is it's not catching up with the rest of the world. Like battle rap is still fucking using really dumb jokes and stupid shit and like when I went there the experience of being there for the whole day was really draining and it was really like a negative kind of experience. Like I don't want to slag off Don't Flop because I love it and I think it is great. But it needs to catch up and me being there with my friends, who are like, you know, queer artists and stuff, they didn't know what the fuck to do with us. They were so [INAUDIBLE] about us being there, which is retarded. I don't understand why they're really proud of creating a space that is really homophobic or scared of... And I genuinely think it's homophobic in that people are scared of gay people, like they genuinely... It freaks them out. That's ridiculous.

But me being there was a political gesture of like, I went there and I stood there and I was like.... Like my first verse I'm like, I know exactly what you're going to do, you're going to call me gay, you're going to tell me I'm fat, you're going to say all this stuff about me. And that's exactly what he did. And there's even a part in like his second bar or something, he's trying to do it and he's like you've already said that and I'm like, yeah, like I know exactly what you're going to say I know what I look like and you are blatant as anything. And my bars were just all about being like how it's not insulting to call me gay. I'm not insulted. So, then every time he said it it then didn't really work because it was like, well, I've already told you, that's not offensive. And like just dissecting the fact that like he's got a big reputation because he's a freestyler but what's the fucking point of freestyling if what you're saying is shit, go home and write something, basically.

**DT:** I couldn't agree more. And actually, it annoyed me that Scrobious Pip had taken the stance to not be involved. Because I think it would've have really highlighted the fact that if him and Mark Grist had got up and done a full battle with no homophobic references and what I would assume would be very clever very well thought out rhymes, and quite insulting towards each other without all that shit, it would've proved the point that you could move all of this on. So, it's a shame but what he was worried about, he said, because he's obviously quite famous, his persona or whatever would ultimately advertise the art form or whatever and he doesn't want to do that.

**LW:** I think as well like it's... I like to set myself stuff that I know is hard. And I could quite easily write a verse that was just really nasty about someone's girlfriend. I know how to speak in that language. I've been surrounded by it forever but setting myself the rules of being, right you've got to write nine minutes of stuff which doesn't make a single reference about him being gay, doesn't make a single reference about him having a small dick or about his body. It doesn't make any references about people that aren't here. It's like not sexist and like... Setting yourself those tasks makes writing it a much more rewarding process. Because it's difficult, you know.

**DT:** Well, yeah, it's the same as an artist, setting yourself rules and coming up with manifestos and actually limiting yourself quite often allows you to be more creative, or forces you to be more creative, doesn't it? And I think, yeah, like you said, it's a much more rewarding. we'll go on to the last couple of questions now. What has influenced you most as a writer?

**LW:** Working on a bar. I work for a company called Underbelly and they're amazing and they totally put up with all my leery feminist shit, which is amazing. Like I've worked on bars forever, that's always been what I've done. And majoritively like I write about working on bars as well, both in like poetry but generally I do a lot of writing about working in bars. And they're really volatile spaces because as a barmaid you're kind of initially taught that like, you know, you get the same spiel as like the customers always right and, you know, you smile sweetly at the people that are pissing you off. And it's kind of quite an anti...

Like a standard like country pub is pretty nasty space, it's normally full of fifty somethings that are like homophobic and anti-women and that's that. Like when I moved to London and I got this job with Underbelly like the way they run their team and like the way they support people is amazing. I had beefs where like... I remember my first couple of weeks someone like reached over a bar to grab my boobs and I just was like, what the fuck, and I like went to punch a in the face and then he'd gone and I like ran out and I was also really upset. And they were just like, what a fucking prick let's go find him, like. But like not beat him up, to kick him out.

**DT:** Throw him in the river...

**LW:** Yeah. But like it's interesting now because I got promoted recently, working for them, and so I still obviously work on the bar but I also like look after other people that are working on the bar. And it's amazing the shit that people think they can say to you, like as if... Because people think they're entitled to the service of being served at the bar. Yeah. So, I've had people say all kinds of shit, have you got your clit pierced, let me see. Like every other day, you know, but that's just standard like go-to lines and I'll be like, OK fuck you, you're not getting served.

But there's thousands of people that work on bars that would never say that and wouldn't react that way, and it is actually really distressing to have people talk to you like that. And if I'm lucky enough to be next to someone and I can hear someone talking to them in a way that is really inappropriate, I will always step in. But lots of people don't feel safe to do that. Our company puts on a lot of like burlesque and cabaret and as a result of that we have a really liberal like work team.

**DT:** I was going to say I'd be surprised that it happens so much there because you do get the impression from.... I haven't actually been to the Underbelly but I know what they put on there and it seems like, you know, having something to say about your appearance when going into that venue it just seems odd because of the kind of shows they put on.

**LW:** Well, exactly. It's because it's in Southbank which is such a city boy place and the people that go into the venues, yes, are probably very nice but the drinking areas outside is just city boys that are going to pay £6 a pint. And they are the most entitled people in the world and they are used to talking to women like shit and like people nodding politely at them. Yeah, I think that's probably my biggest inspiration because it's... Working on a bar teaches you to pick your battles. There's some shit that I don't pick up. I'm not going to be like, please don't call me love, because I don't really give a shit. Like, yeah, it teaches you to

pick your battles, it teaches you how to speak to different kinds of people like you hear a thousand and one good stories from a thousand and one people, you see crazy stuff, like it's a really good space to like generate ideas from.

**DT:** And is there anything you would recommend for our listeners to go and see or watch or listen to or [INAUDIBLE].

**LW:** Me, go and google me, no.

**DT:** Liv [INAUDIBLE].

**LW:** I don't know, what am I listening to at the moment? I will always say go and check out some grime. It's the best. Go and listen to some [Skept](#), it'll blow your mind, he's as genius. Go listen to some Saul Williams, he's great. I dunno like I kind of find myself more and more not reading and writing. I don't know, I find it hard to be reading and writing at the same time, if that makes sense. Like if I'm working on a piece of like poetry that I'm going to perform I can't watch any spoken word stuff online because it just bugs me out. So, I dunno, I guess like I just spend all my time watching grime music videos because they are the best. Watch the all-stars remix by Skepta, it's the best thing you'll ever see.

**DT:** Cheers, thank you, that's all the questions.

**LW:** Oh, wicked, we did it.

**DT:** I have nothing left for you, I'm empty, I'm spent. You've destroyed me, like Pedro, or not like Pedro because he was completely fucked and I'm at least walking out of the room. Yeah, we usually take this opportunity to... If you want to mention any blogs or Twitter accounts or...

**LW:** Oh, yeah, shit.

**DT:** You're on Twitter [@Livwynter](#).

**LW:** Yeah, [@Livwynter](#).

**DT:** I will say all the... Everything you mentioned now will be in the link... In the description of the video on YouTube or whatever, it will be somewhere so...

**LW:** I would say like definitely watch me vs Pedro because it'll make your day.

**DT:** Yes, so if you follow Liv on Twitter and Silence Found a Tongue, it's [@Silent\\_tongue](#) because we'll post that video as well because hopefully by the time this goes out that will be online as well.

**LW:** That will hopefully be out.

**DT:** But I'm not sure, neither of us are sure on the date on that. Also, I wanted to say because in your poem 'Outward' you reference [Hito Steyerl](#), don't you, and what's the article called again.

**LW:** Hito Steyerl '[In Defence of the Poor Image](#)' and it's amazing, isn't it?

**DT:** It's about the degradation and undervaluing of images and as things become more digitalised and widely spread images online become degraded, our own image becomes...

**LW:** And it's really important in reference to like... As poets like how we document ourselves every time we video ourselves. It's getting further and further from the source. So, like read it, it's so good

**DT:** Yeah, it's really fascinating. I am really glad that you actually... When you sent me the poem you actually gave me the name of the writer because I wouldn't necessarily have looked that up. So, there will be a link to that somewhere as well. But her name Hito Steyerl, 'In Defence of the Poor Image'. But it's...

**LW:** Amazing.

**DT:** Yes, it's fantastic. Thank you, Liv.

**LW:** Thanks.

**DT:** Yeah, and follow her on Twitter and then you can find out where she's performing and stuff and...

**End of transcript.**