

**Kate Houston**

## **Vicious or Virtuous?**

Metallic disks land on a surface  
Causing a sound more recognisable  
Than ever before. To tell the solid  
Cost from the worthless losses;  
That five pence that isn't worth the creak  
Of bones to pick up.

*A camera lens whirs to focus on a hunched  
Body. One of the crowd in particular  
Distinct, only, because it looks  
Forlorn enough to be a threat to  
Something.*

A cycle of conversation fills the room  
Asking meaningless, roundabout, questions for the sake of making  
Noise. Repetitive exchanges of false  
Smiles and bravado that shield the truth  
From the handshake.

*A handheld spotlight skims the gravel, revealing  
Fleeting instances of milk-soaked silence.  
Darkened feet tread over a foreign space  
Which whispers with frustration at its  
Invasion.*

A loop of stern faces around a desk too large  
To make contact with anything other than  
Words. Each man seeks to draw eyes to his  
Point of the ring, without disclosing the secrets  
He holds to his chest.

*Wrists, shackled by counterfeit silver,  
Steeled against the disgrace of a head bowed  
By superior hands into a prayer, in the back  
Of a car who's doors can only open from the  
Outside.*

Despite cuff, coins and courtesy, the circle  
Will inhale. The peak reaching skywards, extending  
The lows into dry soil. My path has not yet led  
In one direction or the other, but I see a turn  
Before me and hope, somehow, for  
Neither.