**Runner-up – Forward/emagazine Creative Critics 2019**

**Katie Kirkpatrick, Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge**

**Responding to: 'Scenes for a Bright Town' by Helen Tookey**

**mosaic**

in this shard

is the curve of his iris

dirty sea water grey

polluted with questions,

glinting, like sunlight on the crests of waves,

when answers are evaded

in this shard

is the inside of his lip

so vulnerable, so soft,

pink like the blush of your cheeks

every monday afternoon

in this shard

is the palm of his hand

with carvings that tell fortunes,

a life line to a time

just beyond the coastline

grey pink flesh

the shards are set in grout -

and still he looks up expectantly

**Commentary**

Tookey’s poem made a lot more sense to me when I focussed on the final image: reconstructing a city using ‘fragments’. For my poem, I wanted to take the theme of fragmentation but apply it to a person rather than a city.

I admired the way Tookey’s poem is split into sections, each of which captures its own distinct image, and so decided I wanted to mirror this; rather than subtitles, I chose to use spacing to create the visual image of a mosaic.

The imagery in my poem is inspired by that of Tookey’s: she focuses on nature and the seaside, and I decided to echo this by comparing features of the boy to sea water, waves, and the coastline, thus giving my poem a sense of setting. I tried to mimic Tookey’s skill at conveying character and plot without explicitly mentioning it through details such as ‘every monday afternoon’ and ‘when answers are evaded’: she expresses so much so subtly in lines like ‘not midnight exactly – three minutes past/by the kitchen clock’. These kinds of phrases also allowed me to mirror the uneasy, quiet tone of Tookey’s poem.

The ending of my poem is intended to suggest that the shards of the mosaic are fragments of memory, and that the character referred to in ‘your cheeks’ is expecting too much from their memories. This was inspired by the way the final line of Tookey’s poem pulls together the idea of the different images making up the city, and also makes readers question the language of the title: surely a ‘bright’ city doesn’t need to be reconstructed? I tried to mirror this through the idea that the last line makes readers consider whether this is really a mosaic, a memory, or a living person.