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Biography: Include a short bio written in the third person for each author (maximum 100 words) beginning with current full job title and institution.	Katie Beswick is a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. She also works as an arts journalist and a poet, publishing widely in magazines, journals and books. Her hybrid book of poetry/criticism <i>Slags on Stage: Art, Sex, Class and Culture in Britain</i> will be published by Routledge in 2025. She is also the author of <i>Social Housing in Performance: The English Council Estate on and Off Stage</i> (Methuen 2019) and <i>Making Hip Hop Theatre</i> , (with Conrad Murray, Methuen 2022).
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Synopsis: Please provide a 60-word synopsis of your article, and between three and five main keywords.	This crown of sonnets (sequence of linked sonnets) presents the social, political and environmental landscape of vehicle waste, scrap metal and pollution, in the UK and beyond. Based on a short period of ethnographic research it used the sonnet form to explore the possibilities of poetry-as-criticism for presenting the emotional and affective aspects of empirical research.
References and further reading: No more than six references should be included, formatted in APA style.	<p>Kohm, S. and Walby, K. (2020). <i>The Temporalities of Waste: Out of Sight, Out of Time</i>. Routledge.</p> <p>Liu, Y. Kong, F. Santibanez Gonzalez. E. (2017) Dumping, waste management and ecological security: Evidence from England, <i>The Journal of Cleaner Production</i>, 167(20), 1425-1437</p> <p>Salles Martins, L. Fonseca Guimarães, L. Barbosa Botelho Junior, A. Alberto Soares Tenório, J. Croce Romano Espinosa, D. 'Electric car battery: An overview on global demand, recycling and future approaches towards sustainability, <i>Journal of Environmental Management</i>, 295, 2021.</p> <p>Richardson, R (2013, August 29) <i>Learning the Sonnet</i>. Poetry Foundation. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70051/learning-the-sonnet</p>

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In 2023, the London Mayor extended the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), meaning vehicles that do not meet European Emissions standards are charged a daily rate of £12.50 for entering the zone, now covering all thirty-two London Boroughs. Imperial College London estimates that annual excess deaths due to small air particles, particularly nitrogen dioxide, which is produced when fuel combusted in an engine combines with oxygen in the air, stand at around 4,000. It is clear that something needed to be done about London pollution, to which traffic contributes significantly, but it was also obvious that ULEZ would hit low-income Londoners the hardest. Perhaps it was especially noticeable to me because my husband makes his living in deliveries and waste disposal, using a non-compliant van to carry out his business. ULEZ costs would set us back an average of £300 per month, a quarter or more of his average before-tax earnings. It was not an option for us to trade in for a compliant vehicle, although scrapping grants were available. Anyway, I wondered, what would be the net environmental result of this scrapping in the long run? Where would the wasted vehicles go, and would what replaced them really be any better?

These questions led to a period of research into vehicle waste, the green vehicle economy and scrap metal. During this process, I came to view the emissions themselves as a form of waste — substances that have served their purpose but remain and must be dealt with. I spent time at local dumps with my husband, speaking with him and observing him and his colleagues. I read widely about vehicle scrapping, pollution and the waste involved in so-called green emissions. I came across the concept of a car ‘graveyard’, the name given to (usually curated) sites where vehicles are left to decay. I visited some of these sites and watched many YouTube videos showing examples from around the world.

I found this research emotional. It took me from nature to culture, from landscape to object, and brought me into contact with a lively range of people and conflicting ideas. In my work as a scholarly researcher straddling arts and social sciences, I have become frustrated with the academic and critical writing forms. I find them limited in their ability to convey the emotional sense of the world, stripping knowledge of its necessary emotional content. I have therefore recently begun experimenting with what I call ‘critical poetry’, using poetry’s access to feeling as a way into criticism. I use the form of a ‘sonnet crown’ to present and explore my thoughts and findings in the area of vehicle waste.

The sonnet seems to me an ideal form for poetry-as-criticism, because it involves the setting out of an argument, or the presentation of a world, and also requires a ‘turn’, or a ‘volta’ towards the end, where the expectations of the argument are upended. This means it has a built-in complexity that avoids the simplistic, something it is so easy to be when it comes to questions of waste and sustainability. My intention for these sonnets is to portray the landscape of vehicle waste as well as its politics and humanity. I’ve aimed to merge a sense of nature with an evocation of the real human lives affected by waste and

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sustainability policies and practices. The sonnets straddle the sombre and the comic, bringing places and characters in and out of view.

I: The Cemetery

Some of the corpses are yellow as stale loaves;
collapsing into rust, moss and browning leaves.
Parked neatly, row on row; scalped by the breeze.
Pared back to engine, metal frames like bones,
skeletal — you can almost hear the echo of their moans,
the final breaths the dying engines breathed.
Puddles refracting as a mirror; ice drifts freeze
and melt again. In the summer everything grows.
A minivan so still it might dissolve to dust —
a Volkswagen's tyres wind-stripped bald.
Nothing natural, but the forest's background flush.
Not bodies broken, really— they were never alive at all.
they only moved because of us —
because of us, they're stalled.

II: Statutory Off Road Notification

Because of us, they're stalled —
my keys in the ignition, turned, turned and turned,
the clamour of the engine, clutch smells burned —
like when you were seventeen, in your first Ford
smoke spilling from the bonnet, gear stick too warm.
I remember how you stood at the roadside, unconcerned
as little flames licked the windscreen, and surged
until I took a bottle of water and poured.
That car sits in your mum's driveway now,
bricks piled under its naked wheels.
Remember how we'd drive through town,
each bump setting the alarm in wailing peals?
Cars: for a while we drive them round and round,
eventually they die, or we're killed.

III: Burnt Out

Eventually they die, or we're killed.

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That's the bargain we make with machines.
On every estate a reminder, dumped near the green,
of this bargain, and how it's been fulfilled
again and again; by some joyriding kid.
Those charred seats, the shattered windscreen,
its barbequed hulk, like a thing from a dream.
And the sound of the tarmac, absorbing a skid.
I run my hand along its rusted hood,
a teenager's cry or the yowl of the car —
imagining the smash as it crashed by a tree;
the smell of warped metal and burning wood.
And, always, compact as the energy in a star,
in the ruins of it, a call to be free.

IV: Scrap Metal

In the ruins of it, a call to be free —
we treat the thing like a butcher treats a carcass,
or a caveman, stripping his kill in long grasses.
Skinning the animal, twisted, on our hands and knees;
each part weighed — we guess the latest fee,
toss the copper in our trunks, unfastening
bolts and steel screws; a little pile of brass
from the tank (if you're lucky). It's a good day by degree —
how many lacerations scar our hands,
the ratio of cash to aching back.
Rent and the children's clothes, the usual demands;
the tax man — there's never any slack.
We pack the parts in our battered vans;
still, the heavier the load, the wealthier the man.

V: Gas Guzzler

The heavier the load, the wealthier the man!
that's why I like to drive in my Hummer —
you say *low carbon*, babe, that's a bummer.
I'm a real man — see me swinging my petrol can.
The manliest man since time began.
This car's a tough and durable runner;
in my passenger seat there's always a stunner;

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I'm the latest target of a liberal ban —
Oh, your *electric* car isn't wasteful, too?
Manufacturing emissions? Did you think of those?
And how long will *they* take to offset?
Battery-powered and almost brand new?
Here's a thing you probably don't know —
your batteries ain't carbon neutral yet.

VI: Ultra Low Emission Zone

Your batteries aren't carbon neutral — yet
already it's £12.50 a day,
you must realise I can't pay it.
I'd scrap my van, and what would I get?
Congestion charges, parking-fine threats,
I'm doing a job, accruing more debt.
Yet these manufacturers, all playing the game,
sponsoring: 'Cars: A Sustainable Way'.
The truth is your policy's been a disaster,
more fumes from the traffic, now jammed down one road,
I turn down the next one, hoping it's faster,
a lorry's parked up, ready to unload.
The truth's a thing the powerful never master:
it's lip-service to profit until the Earth implodes.

VII: Landfill

It's lip-service to profit until the Earth implodes,
mounds of stuff, and stuff and still some stuff more.
A wingmirror, a door handle, a slice of cracked floor;
and the world turns, as these things slowly corrode.
You bought a new car, sold it, grew old;
bits of it will survive until the Earth explodes.
Foam from your heated seats, puffed up like mould,
floating across the debris, faster, then slowed.
It's almost a nature, I sometimes think,
as a virus also is; with its taking-over sprawl;
and how of course, we are all interlinked,
here an engine grumbles, there a wall falls.

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A dump and a mountain are indistinct,
when they're far enough away to seem small.