

## *FLIGHT MODE: A SEQUENCE*

### GOING UP

You leave your attitude at the slow-closing door  
To wander among the accoutrements: Eden  
Bath and shower gel, stimulation in sachets  
Brown paper bags on the pull-down faux  
Formica. A poet's canary in a museum, garland  
Of your destination. You remember stasis  
How it sustains the cobwebs, and marvel in transit  
At older lays to hope for the same again, though  
The window tells you different.



## FEAR OF FLYING

Help someone to fly  
premium, private, children, teenage  
gift vouchers apply. Myths of flying  
unveiled. No refund.  
Complementary nuts.

## ATTENDANT

Ross smiles at you, copper-curled and waist-coated over protozoic waters. You know exactly what it means, silently in wait, aestheticising leg room and the charisma of smallness on this carpeted Airbus – a gift. His boots.

## UPGRADE

Runway furlong desert  
“Captain Jesus” once known as Kurt  
mans the steed, goat’s horns on tail.  
Here the first part: nomenclature  
manicure, legroom, pillow-talk  
take-away silk. Oh tiny silver butter-knife!  
Or you, half-moon Godiva Heart!  
Sing with the signature mezze, let  
rip Grey Goose! The linen napkin  
wide enough for two. What Hog’s  
settee. Traces, blisters, laboured hands.  
A parting look, through the oval window  
after the city of sand, citadel of iron, oh yes  
you say back to the future, you say back  
where you left the homesick child  
weeping, by the mens’ prayer room.

## OXYGEN MASK

Masquerade death  
Ricardo waltzes emergency charade  
hip cocks mortal prelude  
descent on tap

dancing to a new tender  
legal on fire

with hell in her mouth  
backstage Sonia adjusts  
a strap. Later, the aisles became arcades  
passages of regret, airborne dreams  
cast in Velcro, or laminate alphabets.  
And the windows, once oval pearls  
where a girl saw the horse of clouds  
And the wings  
once the wings were, or could have been  
our anatomy of stress, to be shattered  
among filigree bones, a rubber mask, one tiny sachet of salt.  
Of these ruins, keep them. They are  
the only remains of flight

## CREW

Chaos management but make it sleek: assurance tied in a scarf with the sallow cut of the dip, striped, flying north to keep things tight and vertical, making off days on and the hairpin a clean team mascot. Are you ready for your portrait? Blush notwithstanding.

## CUP SONG

Avoid the tea and coffee, they say,  
to stay unfazed by the greyer drag  
of early starts sans smoking lounge  
for company. Our range of freshly  
brewed hot drinks will keep you going  
at any time of day. Can I be your sugar  
babe? We'll change our formation  
every half-hour, as if our stereo  
world had unreserved seating. It's good  
for the brand. No milk, please.  
The strange sheen on English teeth.  
You hope this time the run is smooth,  
tho' the bitter has its own silver lining,  
aches unkempt in the waiting. You lie  
back with foam earphones and think  
of other markets as if from above.  
You groan, perhaps – the true sound  
of a longer life.

## A LARUM

Travelling light you carry mild peril  
with you, the collective shuffle  
that reads 'This is not a drill':  
an empty Frankie & Benny's, daggers  
in the Aspire lounge, temple of class  
warfare and Gordon's gin, the pulse  
of nervous pupils feeding cabin  
pressure and the sound of someone  
truly awful making flexes from the art  
of plaint. Heed colours – the sorry pops  
of orange and laminate stripes of blue,  
'Brace Brace' sponsored by Barclaycard.  
'It's safer inside,' said the woman  
in uniform, the shepherdess of Luton.  
In some versions you find yourself  
an unexpected saviour.

## A MAGAZINE

for the get-up-and-go generation  
with one boutique lesson: make  
long-term friends on short-haul  
flights. cash only. euros preferable.

## SICK BAG POEM

“Pass the snack box, buddy  
I left my heart in Heathrow.”  
He emptied tears of leftover romance  
gathering loss in watertight paper  
and you imagine shorthand:  
*Love On the Runway.*  
Loosening the belt, big for the seat  
your companion over Greenland dreams  
in tiny sobs, breaking up the roar.  
Discontent unfolds its vice  
And sequence says, *play again.*  
Silver float ice boat jet force  
What? It is morning in here

UNACCOMPANIED MINOR

Get me  
Out

## LIFE JACKET

In the unlikely event  
of landing on water  
fit yourself

before infants.

*Drip drop, Mama.*

*Sing Oh Come Away, Rosebuds.*

*Sing Willow Songs, Cry Karaoke Pollution Dreams*

*Play Birds in the Turbine, Whisper: Oxygen Baby, Brace*

La la

There are no landings  
On water

## ICARUS BLUES

The father's test is ever fright.  
A hopeful boy, in makeshift wings  
Sent to the sun, dreaming of height.  
Up here, there is no telling  
But sky-blues still the engines sing:  
'Trust melts with incandescent light'.

*Flight Mode: A Sequence.*

By Otto & Gisel

Otto & Gisel are Jack Parlett and Anne Stillman. They've previously published a collaborative sequence of poems, 'Hot to Trot', in the twentieth anniversary edition of *Blackbox Manifesto*. Together they have written a piece on Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* for the book series *Arcades Materials*; the essay was composed via epistolary exchange between Paris and New York. They are currently working together on a longer project tentatively titled *Acting Like Frank O'Hara*. Anne Stillman teaches English at Clare College, Cambridge and Jack Parlett is a Junior Research Fellow at University College, Oxford.

'Flight Mode' is a sequence of poems written, sent and exchanged by Otto & Gisel while these fictitious personages travelled – separately and together – on airplanes. The title refers not only to this mode of composition but to the 'flight safe mode' on mobile phones, where the majority of these poems were written. Our sequence is an endeavor to imagine poetic suspension - between persons, destinations, time-zones – via the peculiar liminal space of the commercial airliner. The compositional history of these poems is a record of travel between persons and places, and, as such, it attempts to inhabit the highs and lows of flight: the mythological romance of the air-borne, the imaginative space of speed and cloud, while also dwelling on the hum-drum details of commercial travel – seat-belts, exits, in-flight magazines. Our sequence wishes to capture the pleasures and perils of this means of travel through space and time. Fasten your seat belts. Turbulence might happen at any time.