No Man’s Land – Joelle Taylor

His face was a foreign country

and his tongue was a concealed gun.

His laugh was an air raid siren

and his mouth a deep tunnel dug in Palestinian earth,

a shallow grave on the edge of town.

His beard was the barbed-wire fence that surrounded the camp

and his skin a hand-written map sewn into his shirt,

a deserted field at midnight.

His eyes were abandoned soft buried landmines

and his voice radio static caught between stations.

His ribs were the gripped bars of a Guantanamo Bay cage

and his smile the careful line at Customs,

the border between territories.

And he walked like a school child lost in the rubble of her home

and he spoke like a low-flying plane looking to land.

Welcome to England.

Asalaam alaikum.

But Immigration Central was a love letter written in another language

and when he smiled

his teeth

were the New York

skyline.