

**'Not saying goodbye at Gate 21'**  
**Kathleen Jones**

The final call  
for boarding  
hand-luggage scanned,  
the last, forgotten,  
canned drink binned.  
I watch him through the glass  
walk to the door and hand  
over his printed pass.

He waves,  
makes the clown's face  
that means 'Cheer up,  
this time I won't be gone  
for long'. He turns,  
then turns back, lifts one hand  
to the terrorist-proof glass. We place  
palm to palm  
remembered skin  
on either side of the cold surface.

Abruptly,  
already past tense,  
he has wheeled off towards  
the journey and, unlike Orpheus,  
not looking back,  
I watch the swerve  
of his head, his coat flap. Then  
the screen says  
'Gate closed. Boarded' and  
I walk away with his absence.