

Alice May Williams,
Letters to Kitty, 2018



I would be lying if I said
your face was the first
thing I noticed about you.
It wasn't your face but your
gesture which drew me in, your
hardened forearms level with
my face, as you towered above
me, looking ever forward.

But sometimes clarity calls
for chronology and so we start
at the top, the North, the
beginning, your face, smoothly
emerging from a block of
marble. I look up, following
the line of your arm, the
nape of your neck, the bonnet
strings flow toward your
jutting chin.

My sister had just got
married. Set in stone. We
took a photograph of the
wedding party at the feet
of another statue. Twenty
steps between us and her
feet, and the street and
the square and the pub and
all the other monuments and
memorials, buildings large
and small, tangible and
touchable, material and not
were all grouped under the
same collection of letters,
VICTORIA(n). Reminders of
a history that was clear,
written, understandable. I
stand behind the photographer.
I am the maid of honour.
I wait.

I am looking for something,
unwritten, unreadable,
unknown, unknowable.

The next day I find you.

Your lips curl upwards at the
edge of your perfectly set
mouth. Caught in stone time,
stern time.

I try to catch your eye but
you stare just beyond us,
past us, settling your gaze
somewhere in the near future.

We must continue to move
onward, forward in this
narrative, but backward in
my original journey, to the
first thing I noticed about
you. Down your bonnet strings,
sliding past your no longer
beating heart to the point
where your left hand pauses,
touching the fabric in the
crook of your right elbow. I
recognised you, in the flash
of this gesture. Together we
unfurl the roll of your sleeve
to see what is hidden beneath.

We Can Do It!
Dressed in the gestures of
another time, you perform an
image of an endless hope which
must never arrive. You stride.
You stride.