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**The Words For
These Things**

Barbican Young Poets 2019

**GUILDHALL
SCHOOL**

Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning

Creative Learning aims to shape and deliver new approaches to engagement with the arts, involving people of all ages across a diverse range of styles, genres and disciplines.

Our programme helps young people find their creative voice. Providing access to the best arts events, platforms for creativity, opportunities to gain skills, jobs and working together to bring their ideas to life.

We bring together our world-class artistic partners with students and communities in ground breaking new ways to create inspiring arts experiences.

We create new routes for people to take part in the arts from first experiences to higher education programmes and professional training.

We use our 30 years' experience of working in east London to launch cultural partnerships that offer outstanding creative opportunities for every young person across the eight east London boroughs.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow through young people's arts and education programmes across every art form – creating platforms for creativity, programming with and for young people.

The Words For These Things

Barbican Young Poets 2019

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Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning is delighted to welcome you to the Barbican Young Poets Anthology 2019; a poetry collection that showcases the work of our immensely talented community of young artists

At Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning, we work with young people to unlock their creativity and raise their confidence and self-esteem. All of the work you read inside this anthology has been created by emerging poets aged 18 - 25, living in east London and further afield, who have been working together as part of a community of young poets for the past 6 months.

The Barbican Young Poets come together for fortnightly workshops at the Barbican between September and March each year. Under the inspiring leadership of artist and educator Jacob Sam-La Rose, with the expert assistant-tutorship of Rachel Long, they explore a diverse range of poetic genres, styles and themes in order to push their developing voices in new artistic directions. The poets study the craft of writing, and they explore, through collaborative project opportunities, the power of performing their material live. Through this process, each poet goes on a journey, discovering what is unique about their own artistic voice, supporting and challenging each other, and evolving together as part of a collective of young artists.

2019 is very special year for Barbican Young Poets, as it marks the 10th anniversary of the creation of the programme. Founded by Jacob in 2009, he has overseen its growth and development across the last decade. In that time, Jacob and his assistant tutors have mentored dozens of young writers, supporting them to grow and develop as poets and artists. Alumni from the scheme have gone on to become performers, journalists, multidisciplinary artists and more, and most importantly have continued to be part of the Barbican Young Poets community.

On behalf of all of the participating poets and Creative Learning staff involved in delivering the programme, I would like to offer a very warm thanks to Jacob and Rachel for their commitment and dedication to each of the poets. Jacob and Rachel's passion for each and every young person they work with makes an extraordinary contribution to their development, as they flourish as young people, and push the boundaries of what it means to be an artist making work today, and in the future.

It is ever a delight to work with such a talented group of young people; we hope you find the same enjoyment in reading the work collected here in their anthology.

Jenny Mollica

Head of Creative Learning
Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Nothing is ever guaranteed. Although I established Barbican Young Poets with the intention of creating something long-lasting, I could never have imagined I'd be here a decade later celebrating everything our programme has grown into. Over the past ten years, we've grown from creating a space for a small congregation of young writers who met fortnightly in a corner of the Barbican Centre to a community of poets and creative professionals that branches out through London, across the country and around the world.

And we still have work to do. Perhaps now, more than ever, it's important for us to remember that communities aren't simply built on dreams or good wishes. A successful community requires active participation and meaningful investment from each of its individual constituents. It's easy for us to hide in crowds, to question what difference one person makes, whether anyone notices when we're not present, whether anyone really misses our voice if we don't speak up or speak out. Whatever vision I may have for this programme as lead facilitator and artistic director means little without the actions of each poet who accepts the invitation to join us in making that vision something tangible, something real, something they themselves can feel is their own. Every poet counts. And each poet has a part to play in our community's continued growth and success.

As always, there are many people to acknowledge. Notably, the Barbican's Creative Learning Department—manifested this year through Kirsten Adam, who we've welcomed into our sprawling family in her role as Creative Learning Producer and Lauren Brown, whose tireless dedication to all she does and ability to handle even the most demanding tasks with a seemingly effortless grace stands as an inspiration. We celebrate the space carved out by Lauren Monaghan-Pisano, whose presence and efforts have left an indelible mark on the work we do. Hats off as always to Rachel Long, whose care for the finer details of our programme and attention paid to each of our poets are exemplary of the way this work should be done.

Nothing is guaranteed, but I'm willing to place a bet on the future. I'm looking forward to seeing what we'll do with the next 10 years.

Jacob Sam-La Rose

Artistic Director / Lead Facilitator



Heart Through My Stomach

You're the heat in my lungs brought on by jollof
The sweet vanilla in Nigerian custard
You're the thickest fried plantain in the freshly fried batch
The okra soup that swoops and draws so gelatinously elegant

You're the softest puff puff
The hottest akara
The fish in my moin moin

The tightness of my wrapper against my chest
You hold me up, draw me in, you send me home

Tear

I'm a lion chasing all that threatens to aid me
mane restricting my vision of right

I'm the pink of a labia
ripped and torn bits of reflection

I'm the fog that sits upon the cemetery
Hosting apparitions of names I used to own

I'm a harmonica
An out-loud annoyance played and played

I'm the sweat of night, the unforgivable acts at the slither into the day knocking harmonies
onto glass windows

not presented as they are but as something
rather pretty

I'm the corner of a room
a cabinet wedged into me

when you come off Google images and stick your head out the window¹

After *Cold* by Remedios Varo (1948)

and winter is the result of naked trees, not their cause
and the sky is dark early
because this thing passing through
takes all the white from the air right after noon
but always forgets
to take the vacuum of space with it.

the white flying up to meet it

is an answer to your prayers for release
you, in your bedroom
wonder if he has taken your brightness too.

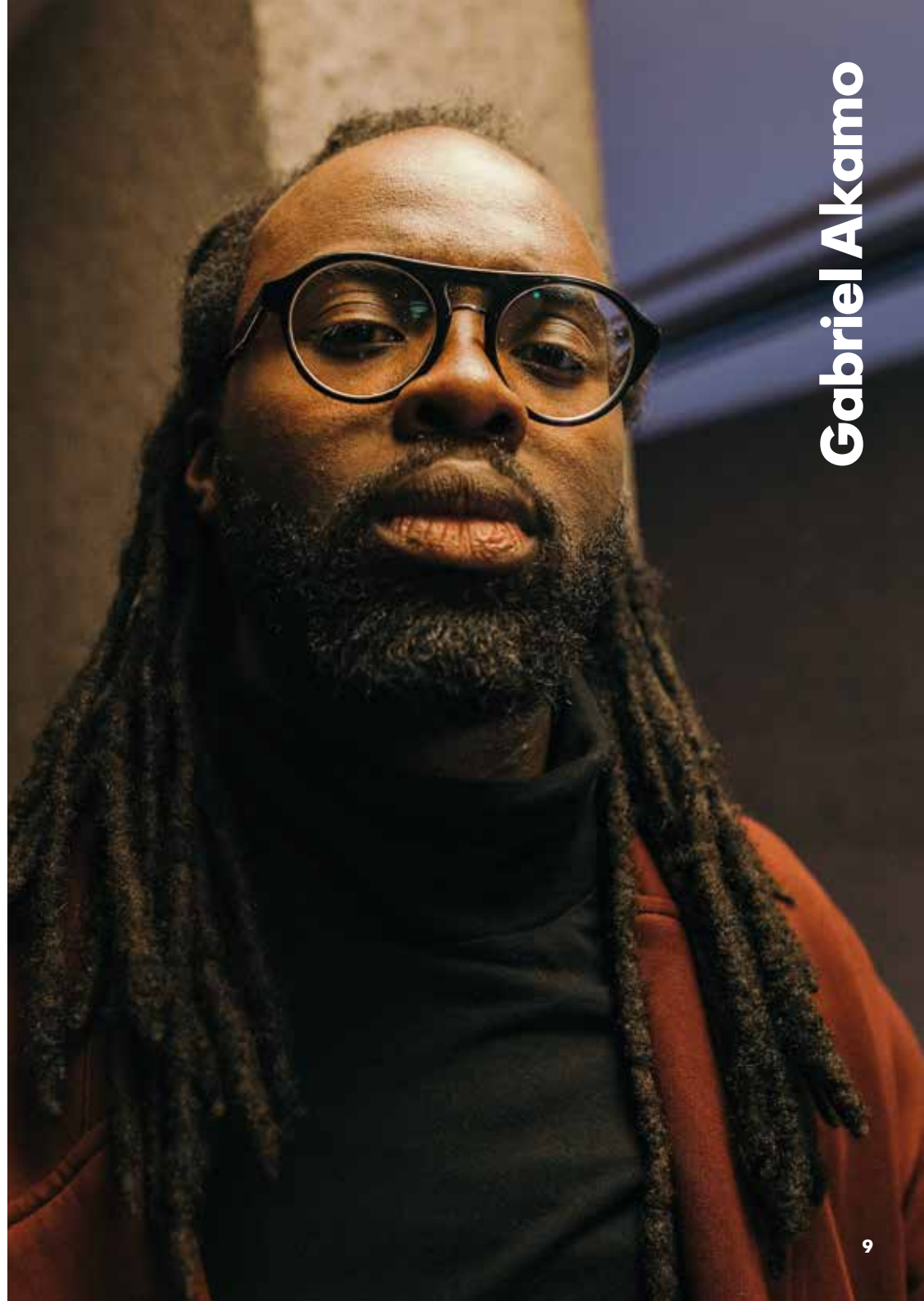
maybe you've been reading it all wrong.

make this the spirit of taking and giving
a sack for collecting prayers
a black hole

scrap metal collector
rag and bone thing;
its vessel is not a comet,
just holy light trying to pass through cloud.
a smudge on a lens mistaken for a man.

you ask yourself how to deal with this darkness of days, turn on your
desk lamp as the candle light hops off the wick, dancing out of the room
through the ceiling. the sycamore at your window fingers the sky. turn on
your desk lamp, work through the darkness of day. watch the bulb: stable
thing that won't move, stretching flame in a snow globe rounding by its
own gravity

¹ Written after *Frío (Invierno)/Cold (Winter)*, a symbolic painting by Spanish Surrealist artist, Remedios Varo, 1948





the way of nature

a tree splits
a tree splits, clean
crown pluming like
it has grown down the phone
miss said school is not for play
i want to hold him and tell him the difference
how when
a deciduous
the loop
its leaves
energy
it's winter
tree doesn't
wait for
in the
at a stretch of water
we sit side by side
sun seeps into the droplets
that fall from our bodies
i point at a tree
as the birds flee from it
tinny bells choral in their throats
we count the seconds it takes
for them to cross the sky
one, two...

and the way of grace

and forms a fork
pleats, feasting for light
my brother's voice
resonant with life
to him, a bud of five
between a coniferous tree and a deciduous tree
it's winter
tree closes
and loses
to reserve
how when
a coniferous
it won't
new growth
spring
at a stretch of water
we sit side by side
sun seeps into the droplets
that fall from our bodies
i point at a tree
as the birds flee from it
tinny bells choral in their throats
we count the seconds it takes
for them to cross the sky
one, two...

"I wanted to be loved because I was great. A Big Man. I'm nothing. Look; the glory all around us, trees, birds. I dishonored it all and didn't notice the glory. A foolish man."

Terrence Malick, *The Tree of Life*

First Gods

Forest's name: "the moss".
These trees have long memories;
seasons without names.

New life comes with a fog,
a blanket for modesty
summer burns away.

The stronger the smell
of the sun warming the grass
the nearer the rain.

Our first god: Big Tree.
Shattered by time and lightning.
I kept a piece. Keep.

We hid something here.
It lasted seven winters.
I still look sometimes.

Father wears a watch
Whose hands haven't moved in years.
He won't tell us why.

"I remember when
all of this was fields, my boy.
Then the wind changed."

October sunshine
bites at the back of the throat.
Ending, or promise?

If a year's a wheel
I've bitten mine into gears:
autumn applies oil.

December arrives.
I build blanket cathedrals,
kneel, and worship cold.



**Nameless**

[Bella]

A dizzying butterfly. Panicked sparrow.
Shimmering wing-tipped flutter;
Soaring, colours evading distinction.
Caught, restless in pulsing light,
a sequin's endless winking.

[Isabel]

Earth falling away from an oak tree's roots;
sudden nakedness.
A curtain yanked down. Four walls shattering.
Nerve tangled revealed, defenceless,
A thousand gaping mouths, searching.

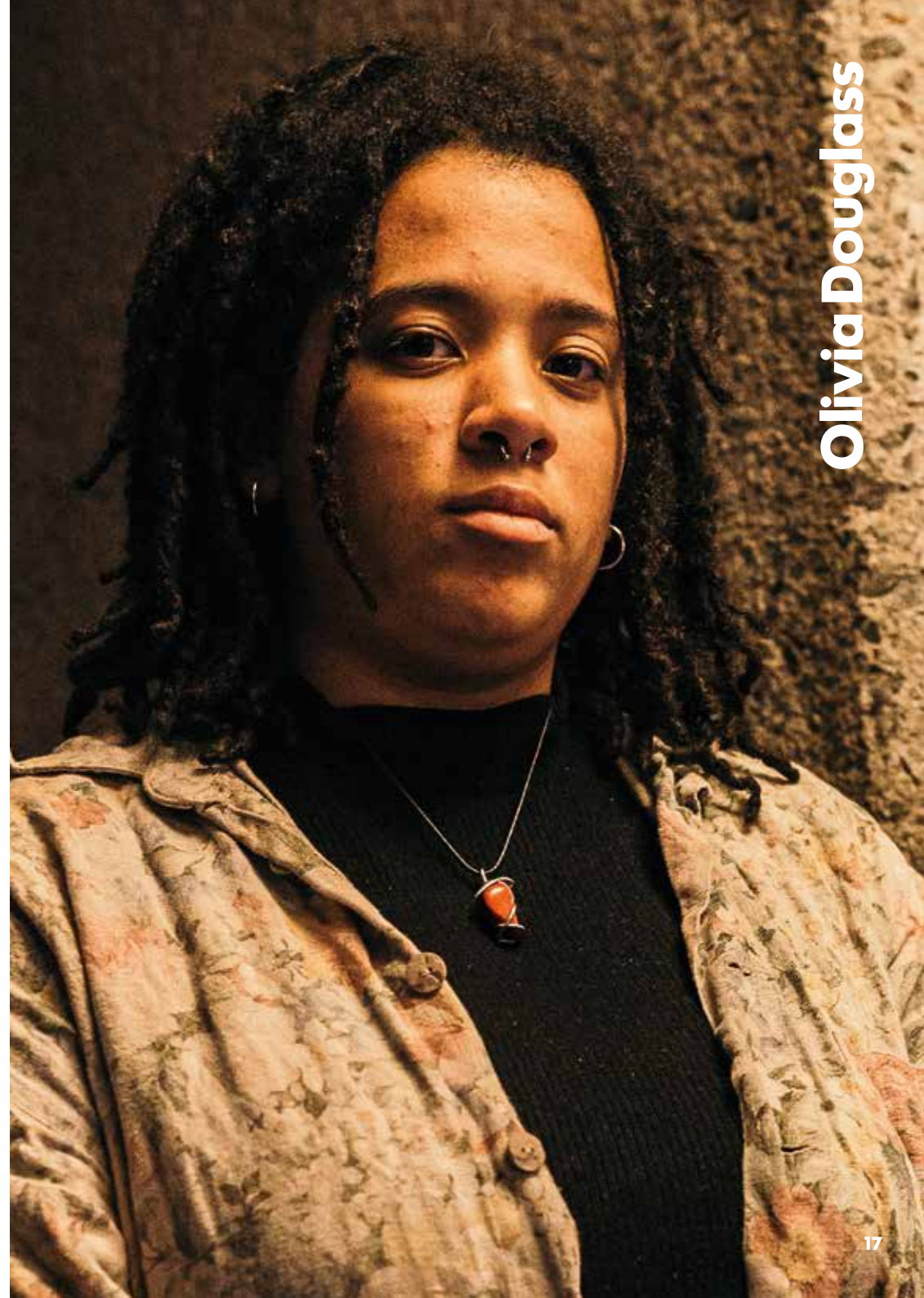
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The space between heart and solar plexus.
Air before it bent to a calling, became wind.
The world before language named her.
Where souls rest before knowing a body.
Unfiltered sunlight, undisturbed sky.

And Everywhere I Go Lately I Find Pink

A pink fleshy blob on a cold grey concrete slab
sits in the centre of the white room
a fleshy pink blob
it has a pores and appears to breathing slowly and heavily
if sliced
thick pink dense inside the knife would go through slowly
like soft cheese
upon looking closer at the blob on concrete
it is apparent that the pink has oozed out from the slab
the surfaces meet together like gum on pavement
it continues to breathe slowly and heavily
and with each breath pulls itself apart from the concrete
beads of sweat begin to form on its raw pink skin
the plaque on the white wall reads
'Do not assist in this process, in case of bleeding'

places where pink came to me include
blood and bone and milk
when I open my lover
mine
my own openings
eyes
around the swelling
at the sore
my mums skin the second I was born
arriving
arrived from the ache
in the ouch
I healed in pink
I've been healing these days



Olivia Douglass

Bad edit of bliss

little did you know that still-being-teething was just as heavenly a response as biting back. I had your bit of the revolution in my palms. it felt like croissant dough. outside, a coyote yelped in bliss. you are beautiful, I said, with everything, not because you are massive like a sea wall but because you, like everyone, are made up of one thousand tender details, so many sweetnesses they make me gip. a million ants criss-cross upon your face. smell of salt crust. twenty more textures than your average person and mass-oh mass-oh I have praises to sing- here

is a cut throat bleeding in a way I know how to patch. I shall plant a million little vegetables in you, dance like a christ-face witch with a cute ass, keep you flesh and happy, and town-cry bleakness in a big blue eye compared to you naked in a bedroom full of fairy lights. when your stretch marks catch the light nothing else dare twinkle.

Wasps

It's three in the afternoon and there's a thought
that everything that happens is happening at the same time
progress casually pre-decided

*The emerald cockroach wasp is so named
for its incandescent blueish-green exoskeleton and the
unusual nature of its neuro-parasitic reproductive cycle.*

conclusions to be arrived at. You shouldn't
pet a dog backwards, you shouldn't fear dying.

*The wasp aims its hook-like sting
at the center of dopamine production
or ganglia. Aware and incapable
of triggering an escape-reflex*

The sun opens like a sore
and the world keeps turning.
*the cockroach host waits
and gestates numerous, hungry offspring.*

I'm seeing dark splotches out of one eye
and should I have started smoking?
Might've been beneficial to the image I was trying
to cultivate, could have been a kind of safety net.
I could say something like "I'm down to a pack a day!"
to no one in particular.

Specifics: *of the roach's metabolic alterations*
you could sever my brain stem and I would continue
to regress in a linear fashion. It's reflexive.
Put me by the windowsill, water me
and call me Gus.

A friend once said that I value my time over
the time of others and I have to laugh when I remember.
independent movement is almost entirely suspended.
The wasp instead must rely on pulling the roach's antennae

*to shepherd the much larger insect
slowly and reflexively forward.*

Of all things, the cornflower blue wallpaper,
the cured linoleum receding over concrete; I can't stand to be here.
Especially at night.

I think when I die, insects will begin once hatched
to fill the recesses of my body, *the larvae take
particular care to consume non-vital organs
so as to complete their maturation -*



Ian Goldberg

whole successive generations living out their lives
entirely unaware of the outside
entirely within the body of their host.

Accept that nothing will ever feel right again.
Accept that nothing will ever feel right again.
Maybe this has all happened once, or even twice already.
I'd need graph-paper to prove it.

But you can't be wrong
if everyone else is dead.



Edelweiss¹

Mother, cheering & dancing to
a common time 4 x 4 beat a checkpoint
becomes a waiting room
turned commune gates wide open
"WIR SIND DAS VOLK"
brown moth on her back,
she does not catch the repetitive
chant that perhaps can break glass,
which the media does not pick up
mother cannot be seen bending
& tending & carrying & cheering
"No one should have to live behind walls"
she is not heard, the white eraser
crumbled residue marks her an
outsider as new borders are drawn

Vater does not land, Dschungel on his mind
"a man lost in time, Near KaDeWe, just walking the dead"
some have been laid to rest on sofas with television for deathwatch
others moved to deserted zombie tower blocks pounding
techno heads disappearing & reappearing like ships in the fog,
arriving on the golden island docks

Bowie

the boat is no longer full perhaps
Brandenburger Gate a gaslight
that the brown moth spreads its wings across
revealing a burnt wing of a refugee shelter,
charred scales a burnt smell so familiar
to us in black, white, deep in the blues
my mother hums for she knows she
was there, borderless & brazen

Ayim

¹ Genus: Leontopodium
Family: Asteraceae

After Guernica

After Cold by Remedios Varo (1948)

I saw the echo of it painted in the snow scene
the solid crystal lines

like Hiroshima
the A-bomb dome
iron rising up like filigree

the shadows on the steps outside the bank building
where people had been waiting for the bank to open up
sitting there because they had arrived before the appointed time

the bank was due to open just a few minutes after the inter-ruption of the bomb
and those waiting outside, though it was not their time, were – all of a sudden – gone

Your Man

Your man is solid as stone.

Here in another country
as soon as he speaks I hear our home

lane ways and green fields
wooden gates and hawthorn trees

the words for these things
dormant on both of our tongues
oak, beech, ash, birch, sycamore

there is no need of these words in the city
but we have both said them before

sure you know yourself
you'll have to thole
we'll have to thole
The word means suffering
a hold of breath
means living through a thing.

Your man looks like my grandfathers –
steady of hand
sure-footed of word.
I listen to him speak – feel heard
by that solid voice that stretches to the eaves.
It's spring at home. The trees are growing leaves.



We Misread Language As Lavender

Gather symbols and sounds from the garden,
rub the buds between palms,
let it sit and dry before use.

Distil oils from homegrown morphemes
let them soothe the hurts, the burns

Scoop a mantra into muslin sachets,
tuck into the skull's dark corners
to quiet the moths.

When nights are bad neighbourhoods
and dawn is not home,
scatter lexemes under your pillow.
Let a story grow
and dream into it.
In the morning,
keep breathing. It'll be there.

Watch phrases buzz, drowsy,
scent-drunk until something catches and
clings on, holding faith in fragile things.

the old house after mandisa apena

i don't visit. on the last night i slept on your floor, bed already in the new house. your walls held each night like an inhale. i floated down your stairs on tiptoe, counting thirteen down in the dark - just to be out of bed, unknown. each morning i wiped the window, wrung out the condensation, amazed lungs could hold so much water. i didn't realise carpets weren't supposed to be that thin. i hid bibles in you. in shallow baths, looking up at your ceiling with mould constellations, i wondered if i'd ever float. i remembered how to lock both front doors, how we had two front doors to lock things out or lock us in. how we couldn't take bins out after sunset. how halloween made our neighbours monsters who bombed eggs, how they only ever launched eggs at us. how your glass shook like a heart attack but you never broke. in daylight we cleaned you of yolk, shrapnel, shame. i wished bricks for their glass, their bones. do your walls and floors still hold my family's implosions? if i put my fingers in your cuts, split plaster and boards, would i feel nuclear again? when i laid down on the floor did you soak up the fallout? is this why i remember so little? why i no longer burn. i always wanted to run from you. i sleepwalk back. i wake up - somewhere

Full Disclosure

I. Observance

Confrontation. It is go. The sense
of going through something.
There are people involved. It is
being the only person to experience it
directly.

I am instructed
to change, told: sick people
with conditions that don't show
need to dress like they're sick
or they're liars.

Was I in hospital?
He was
looking at me. You know
you have to tell
someone. What do you mean?

At some point,
you have to tell someone.

II. Procession

A forced new: scissors
for the shearing. Frustration.
Relief. He snipped at my locs first.
The heft of them:
lighter than I expected.
The weight on him:
unwanted.

It made things more real, more full.
He's grieving my mourning.
He's grieving.
I'm mourning.

III. Repair

Anaesthesia, the tube, trying
to speak
after, how it hurt

every single place
there was once a tube.

I call the wounds
cartographers
until they heal—

Feeling the body mend itself.
Make tracing paper of skin.

IV. Refresh

My blood wished itself
filigree on the bandage edges.

Internal bleeding - the battle
of trying to communicate the inner
to someone who can only see me.

Your email took 9 hours to write—
sentences performing erasure

like mirages on trap doors, like
sour

on tongues, like

all they ever are is a bubble.

V. Grace

I am reminded
that these are confidential

injuries. Sunlight, searching
for resolutions.



Natasha Mbwana



To Hate One's Shade.

It's one train,
it's six hours cold,
it's six hours of lone blackness.

It's asking for forgiveness when one is
led to believe there is something to be
forgiven.

It's asking "why".

Two metal rails dancing on coastlines,

a cloud, filled to the brim tries to warn
me over its gargling mouth.

It's knowing the answer. Stating otherwise.

Summer bled through our skin.

You, a pulsating glow, mistaken for
warmth.
This, a viewing station.
You, a brilliant white,
a distant cousin to God.

Me, a body too close, more tissue than
skin, each thread forgiving the other for
splitting; A begging ember hugging a
body.

This is slow cooking.

We laughed at loneliness,
watched it become a vessel for
every argument, birth an abscess
filled with boiling blood and lamenting
cells.

At midnight we pruned the blossoms on
each other's bodies,
bloomed together into morning,
prayed the dew didn't cleanse our roots.

To record an outburst, a splash on the
eardrums.

To acknowledge our hands do not match
when cradled with one another.

(My grandfather spoke to me of prunes,
the cost of consuming wrinkles with
pleasure.)

Memories speak to me of honey
dripping from her lips.

I owe apology to Sunday Mass. My
palms are not ready for commitment.
There's more scab than skin. I have
failed to believe.

There is a woman with a child about
three seats down.

The child asks for water, I watch closely
as the woman pulls a bottle from her
backpack. Holds it, feels for the lid as she
looks at her son. He seems thirsty, excited
and in love.

He says "Gràcies"

She smiles, then grimaces as she rotates
the cap. Her hand jolts
left, the bottle slips from grip and water
dances for a moment before seeping
into carpet.

He is confused, looks at the water as if
lost. The woman traces his glare to the
darkened spot where the liquid has rest.
She hears the penultimate breath before tears.

She says "Ho sento carinyo, ho sento"

World Parent

All the Nigerian aunties and uncles are holidaying in Dubai.
They're only eating Nigerian food and only talking to drivers.
They're posing as they give thanks, WhatsApping everybody.
Claim it's a kind of home that doesn't know their names so can't wish death.
Say they like it because it holds no notions of them.
For example, all Nigerians are liars who spin tales from imported fabrics.

*

It was a Nigerian man who first discovered Dubai.
The whole world in fact.
Came descending with pockets full of sand and all manner
of earthly.
Where there was water, took the sand, dashed it this way, that, and, where it landed,
stepped.
Continued in this fashion so as to form plain, plateau, et cetera.
To everything he named and added names that no-one would ever say,
liked the sound of his own voice.
Prayed on land, his and of himself.
Imagined it profitable.
Dreamt of land black as oil and dark-skinned sons.
Carved his name in tall letters everywhere, forgot how to spell it, improvised.
Stepped back, looked at his work, This, and was large
and proud.

*

Seeing their son's work, his parents think, This?
For why?
Wonder if they bound him too much
in freedom and comfortable.
They think their son's hands spoiled
soft and pencil-friendly.
They think, instead of lawyer, doctor,
This.
Tell their friends of him,
call him architect, do not say of what.



Realness

see me see me not
i'm most honest with stage
and lights and bougie
most honest shiny
with bills paid and big shot
husband bentley with big booty
wife and yams on the table
see me glossy
bleached and front cover as if
to say my family name
was worth its weight in peau de soie
as if my daddy famous as if my gran
daddy famous one percent chillin



Miss Bones The Butcher's Daughter

After Happy Families

The butcher's daughter knows
the body has its uses.
On her wedding night she goes
into the kitchen. Her father
upstairs, pinned down to the bed
by his knowledge of the naked-eye
anatomy of feathers. The rachis,
afterfeather, downy barbs.

To dress is to bind something
with blue string to keep
its moisture. To dress
is to know the place a knife goes.
When I was a child I learned it all
myself. The places. Sometimes
my sister puts a cloth over the mirror
and dresses in the dark.

These days I play the violin
and kill for fun. It's called an aptitude
for vengeance, I get it
from my grandmother,
and her cheap gold rings,
and a picture of the girl
sucking marrowbones
till they were speechless.

The butcher's daughter
stands behind the counter,
talking to the god
of primal cuts. The first things
separated from the bone.

I say when I have children
I will wash them carefully,
worship every part of meat
I feed them, wash the rust
from off their bodies, but
I have no guarantees.

Something unspeakable
raised on its hind legs is pacing
back and forth across
the living room, I think
it's here to stay. I think
we have to offer it
small plates of bread
and kitchen scraps and hope
soon something
will be satisfied.

On her wedding night she eats
the gristle only tolerated
by old women and by pigs.
Web-like fatty strands
which keep the body whole.
Mouth on the heart
-shaped femur end. If a sound
spills out into the silence,
it's just her father talking in his sleep,
a drop of blood into a pint of milk.

Her father talking to the animals
who have learned to love him.
He doesn't sleep well, the hot ghosts
of the animals, they love him,
but he does not know it.
They crowd around his bed
like flies around a cow's mouth
lazily distending.

Sometimes I leave the oven door ajar
for unknown animals to crawl inside -
since I was a lover they taught me
to be generous. The body
has its uses.

The animals, he only knows
they crowd around his bed at night.
Thin string-necked geese,
fistfuls of rabbits, sows swaggering,
heavy with pin-toothed piglets
brawling for a teet. Box-cutter
chickens treading carefully
across the coverlet
so they don't wake him.

On her wedding night,
her hands upon the countertop
her love knot kidneys quiet,
dry heaving stomach, all veins visible,
cake-white irises, the body
that she knows, it has its uses.

Gutter, Check

I (Merlot)

How did you spend your 21st birthday?
 Was yours spent sleeping in a gym toilet,
 Euston Station
 and on a bus between the two?
 Have you ever seen someone die?
 Ever jumped from a balcony,
 running from whatever incarnation of Death was beating its way through a barely-hinged
 door?
 Did you wonder if it might have been more practical to have died upon landing?
 When was the last time you were held at gunpoint?

I can't breathe I can't breathe I can't breathe

Was it at the hands of those paid to protect you
 or of *The Pied's with the Pipes*?
 Whose colosseum were you born into?
 Sapphire is the blue that accompanies having escaped a bullet.
 It isn't the sort of shade that's tempered with tranquility.
 My vocal chords hold a classless noise, one scarred with an overflow, and
 The Hate U Give,
 it runs riot on my mind.

I see colours.

Merlot is the memory of the friend
 reprimanded for shouting
 after his brother was murdered
 and his mother put herself to rest with wine.

He didn't make it.

"No one deserves to be shouted at"
 is what my employer told me
 after I was told to "stop acting like a hoodlum", saw scarlet,
 and paved the inside of their eyelids with merlot.

My nightmares would no longer be mine alone.

I'm tired.

Cape red was the smile
 constant and infectious
 who tutored his mother through school
 before he was old enough to have taken his GCSEs.
 He could be found in McDonald's at 4am each morning
 studying his way out of a gutter.

He tried to make it.

**Next Up: The houses of Parliament discuss
 the tragic epidemic of homelessness within London.
 Let's head to the studio for a brief update.**

Have you ever watched lost boys kill themselves systematically
 born and bred solely for their fatal escape?

I'm tired.
 I'm tired.
 I'm really, really tired.

**Absolutely riveting! You heard it here first folks!
 In other news, temperamental hoodlums exhibiting signs of
 'Blackout "Moth Trap" Red' will be held accountable for their actions.**

I see colours.

Sometimes I want to numb my mind;
 sail crimson-dissolved oceans.
 Maybe one day I'll bleed it out, serve *boil-soured hibiscus*.
 Have you ever yearned for the return of a smile
 who wanted nothing other than to write change into a world of futures?
 He calmed the *merlots*
 drawing yellows and pinks and greens into existence
 before scribing
 in scarlet ink
 memoirs of the brothers
 he'd been faded into embodying.
 Before he grew tired,
 they called him "*Superman*".

He is the *currant* of my palette and the cure to cancer that was never allowed to happen.
 He is a *soil-stained ruby*; born cardinal and yet into his grave.

The death of another unarmed man has been marked a 'lawful killing'.

I am overcome with colours

It's said that our imaginations are the product of our realities; loaded in light of what we see, or
 hear, or experience. The same applies to nightmares.

They walked past me in the gutter
 They're gon' hear me now.

New York

Hubba Bubba holds its flavour for exactly seven blocks. Santa is Ryan Merenbloom's dad with a beard on. The man with the guitar on the L is deeply unhappy. You pray better when you're drunk. Fire escapes are meant for climbing. Ice cream tastes the best when you've had to chase the truck. It's plain rude not to take advantage of a vacant swing. The djinns at The Battery run their fingers through your hair if you're not careful. That man's donut is too big for his mouth. You don't notice when it stops hurting. Diner coffee is better when you're hungover. Central Park is not a place you want to be at night. Aggressive walking across the marble floor at Saks is a good pick-me-up. You can make a crown out of hair rollers and a couple bobby pins. It is insensitive to take your grandma for a walk through the graveyard. Fresh bagels are meant for toasting and slathering with cream cheese. The Met Gala is overrated. You can't trust people who are good at ice skating.



Serves One

Make a small insertion into the vena cava. Stretch the opening of the artery and begin

to pump. The filling should pass from the right atrium into the ventricle through the tricuspid valve;

you may wish to caress the base so that it is evenly coated. Repeat on the left-hand side;

continue as the skin swells. Slow when you hear it groan. Do not stop

til it overflows, like an almond from its casing, a woman from a slip. You may then insert a finger

into the aorta and begin to excavate another vein with your tongue. It is advisable to pierce

the pericardium with the point of a tooth before sinking in to the hilt. Note

the halwa-like texture, grainy and coarse. When you are accustomed to the taste, you

may then bury your face in it til the juice grafts to your nose, runs raw and sweet over your lips.

Make sure to chew well. When you are finished, lick the remainder from your hands,

taking care to brush over the finger webs, rounding the tip of a canine beneath a nail.

T

I can still remember the black triangle burned
into the kitchen carpet, rounded and gaping
like Mum's gasp as I picked up the iron
and held it, palm pressed against the plate.
Mum yelled at me to drop it.
I did, hand criss-crossed black,
iron tumbling to scorch earth.
It bored itself into the ground
until we got the kitchen tiled.
I was only trying to help.

Mum says Dad ironed out the creases in her accent.
I imagine my Mum's real voice
in every Northern woman I meet,
toasted like Nan's hot cross buns,
not yet burned into a gasp,
rounded and pronounced perfect'y.

Mum won't let me leave the house in creased clothes.
I yell at her to drop her Ts.

When My Brother Wrote My Headstone

The doctor's prognosis is I need a name,
born so tiny they fear I might shrink out of existence.
Mum wants to call me Lukas.
She doesn't get a say
between the seizures and the blood transfusion
as doctors try to name me alive.

Andrew rushes to the reception.
Dad trudges behind, feet hollow,
Lukas on his tongue,
his first son's oblivious footsteps
echoing through the white walls ahead.
At the desk, Andrew insists his brother's name
is Matthew.
Dad doesn't correct him.

I barely leave a scar.
The nurse who sews Mum up is a seamstress.
Mum will live to sew up my well-loved teddy bears.

I imagine Mum with a hole in her belly,
stitched up after autopsy.
She doesn't know my name.



Matt L T Smith



I am the shape of a sunken city

a splitting line, or a floating hallway,
visiting more places than I can count
tongue-less in a half-light
the next year I ate the sweetest orange
Like Paak, remembering the
tone of things not the words or
Finding true north
looking down and seeing
water breaking

with heartbreak

graffitied exhibits and water resorts
to drown a few things in,
napping in the sun on a teal wooden bench
where my lips end
feeling, five years on not remembering the
parking lot, just the songs we sang.
In the swell of river corridors
my body, spinning around in the white
soundlessly

Heartbreak

a splitting	hallway	drown	,
	I can		in the sun
			my lips
remember the		feeling,	not remembering the
tone of things	or	songs we sang.	
Finding true north		in	corridors
	and seeing	my body, spinning	
breaking		soundless	

Teach me slurs like Punjabi ABCs

When I'm seven two men walk past holding hands.
They bump shoulders occasionally, turn their
faces to each other and smile. My Dad turns down to me
and leans in, gleeful eyes, fake reserve:
'It just seems wrong, actually.'

This is when something in my chest crumples like
a soft drink can being recycled.
My Mum doesn't say anything.

When I'm eleven a brown comedian is on Live at the Apollo.
His Dad accidentally watched Toronto Pride on TV:
two Indians parade past the camera.
They lean in and say, heavily accented,
'Ve are gay, ve are *Indian* and ve are *proud!*'

The joke is his Dad insisting gay Indians don't exist,
but the living room is so silent the air is heavy
like a badly tied turban, and this is how I know he is right.

My Dad sniggers for months, bad accent,
'Ve are *Indian* gays!' He checks I know what
each of the slurs he uses means, laughing, becomes the
auntie who ran me through Punjabi ABCs:
ura era iri sasa haha. Queer, nancy, fairy, poof.

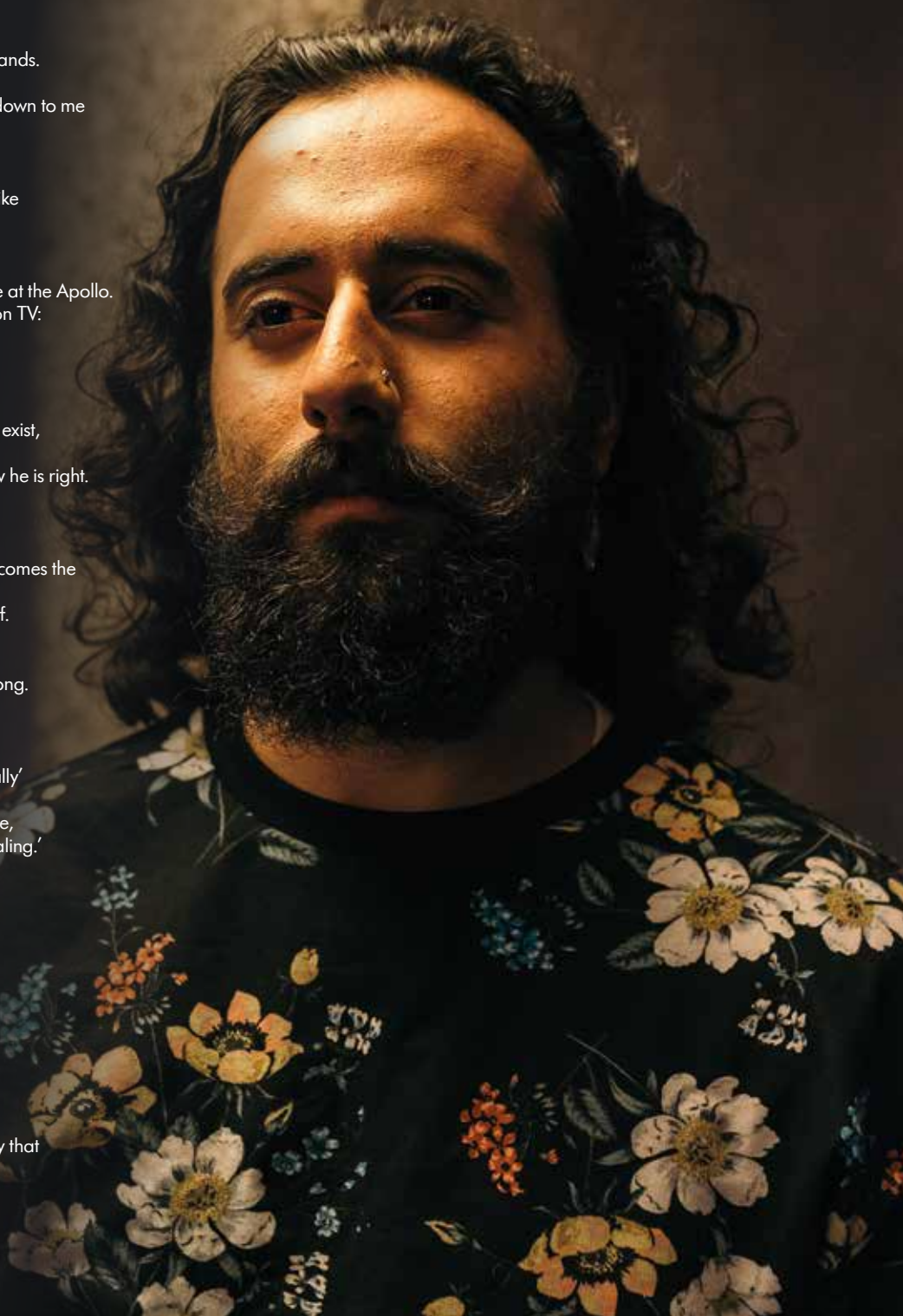
When I look hesitant he excuses himself with
'Well, it just seems wrong, actually.' I laugh along.
My Mum doesn't say anything.

When I'm seventeen I come out to him,
and he doesn't say 'It just seems wrong, actually'
because now it's real. Instead he tells me that
when I catch HIV I won't be able to kiss people,
and I'll just be known as 'that Paki fag from Ealing.'

I learn to love 'queer' but 'fag' and 'Paki' still
make me flinch.
No one cares where Ealing is.

Sometimes I run through each of the wounds
he gave me like inheritance, listing them
like the auntie who taught me letters,
ura era iri sasa haha.
Paki fags don't exist.

When my Mum – repentant, crying – asks me
why I never said anything before, I want to say that
it just never felt right, really.



The Buddha turned my ex into a tangerine

If you peel a tangerine with so much love
you feel every spray of oil on your thumb,
bite on one segment, crumple
its rice paper wrapper and disappear it,
feel the flesh crackle into juice
and gush out between your molars
like tiny dams overflowing -
then that tangerine-moment fills your mind
so intimately that you and it aren't separate,
and you are completely alive.
Thich Nhat Hanh calls it tangerine meditation.

There were flowers on a bush near my house
even in December. He'd broken up with me two weeks
before then and the damp made my jumpers heavy.
I took three deep breaths from one of the roses everyday
because it was like eating a tangerine:
for those seconds I am the bit of the petal
that gives off the smell,
and my sadness was lighter, and delicious.

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Barbican Young Poets is a poetry workshop and community for young writers, which gives you the chance to create, craft and perform poetry and spoken word in a world class arts centre.

Led by internationally renowned poet and performer Jacob Sam-La Rose, you will explore diverse aspects of writing and performance, drawing on your passions, personal experience and the sights and sounds of the Barbican's rich artistic programme to develop and showcase your work in the Centre.

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Barbican Young Poets is for young people aged 14-25. It runs between September and March each year, and is free to take part in.

Applications for September 2018 open in Summer 2018.
Email creative.learning@barbican.org.uk to find out more.

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