

Difficult of Dawns

Malika Booker

The Royal Literary Fund Commission, Malika Booker, 2017

Malika Booker was commissioned by Manchester Literature Festival and the Royal Literary Fund to create a new collection of poems responding to a typical issue of the day. She chose four speeches made by prominent politicians in 2016 and 2017 as her subject, and composed a series of 'couplings' and poetic interventions*. Malika performed the poems on Sunday 8th October as part of the 2017 Manchester Literature Festival.

*See notes at the end for further information

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Manchester Literature Festival would like to thank the Royal Literary Fund, Arts Council England and Manchester City Council for their generous support.



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ⁱDifficult of Dawns

After our darkest night
when Laaad and wooooh pelt out like rain

Manchester is waking up
- to wind chime's whispers and, Laaad this

Difficult of Dawns.
The starlings are voiceless in our city squares and

our first thoughts are with the families
squeezed into grief's three piece suits, stifled in disharmony for

those killed and injured.
Our howling anger combustible like gasoline.

We are grieving today
hearts wringing in murky tumble dryers.

We are strong.
Praise our sweet strength that

opened their doors to strangers,
picking, lost fruit from fragile streets

and drove them from danger
dashing way hate with plenty blessings,

That will prevail
like our city rain

And hold us together.

That Force-ripe Morning

Dare to dream that the dawn is breaking,
like cracked eggs in we sky, this force-ripe morning

on an independent United Kingdom
where crapo croak he song each morning,

this, if the predictions now are right, this will be a victory
grabbed like flies snatched with fork tongue flickering

for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory
where ho who puffed up his puny chest, will deflate

decent people. We have fought against the multinationals, we
No he who croak loud loud will crawl backwards, still preaching.

We have fought against the big merchant banks, we have fought
No he, with forked tongue, who lay eggs in fresh water to float will drown

against big politics, we have fought against lies, corruption and deceit.
No he who said dare to dream that the dawn is breaking, will break out of

Honesty, decency and belief in nation, I think
he will slink out into the night, his sweet water soured.

Containment

This is painful and it will be...

like fawns bucking, as legs break in steel traps

we have seen that our nation is deeply divided than we thought

the ants nibble fawn flesh, whilst vultures and flies savor

so lets do all we can to keep advancing the causes and...

frolic over the consecrated, fling pinched cayenne pepper over our backs,

I have had successes and I have had set backs

in reserves as fawns grazed fearless,

These losses hurt but please never stop believing fighting for what's right...

so de-flesh their bones, bleach them in vinegar, then rinse thoroughly

and to all the women... who put faith in this...

yes, you fragrant fawns, you, wild forests... lather citrus oil into the wind

now I... know ... I know

your chorus of hums... moan... you choirs

and... to all little girls who are watching

may your songs... tiny swaying seedlings, pollinate

because, you know... you know, I believe

fresh breath will soon burst forth from our parched throats.

Divorce proceedings

1. Preliminary

The British people have decided to leave the EU,
by casting nuff shade on this moon bright light eh

and to chart our way in the world
strolling out brazen, brazen, undeterred

but we may be leaving the European Union,
the way fence posts dislodge from weak soil back a yard

but we are not leaving Europe
No! cos that moonlight still shine bright.

2. Contention

Our commitment to the advance of our shared values is undimmed
like go back turn back eh deh, like ram goats still seek to graze in moonshine skin

And we will do this as a sovereign nation in which British people are in control
- goats herding goat, rampaging and carousing, to they own chaotic tempo.

The strength of feeling that the British people have about this need for control
Is like big stone making our cliffs like Dover, a full stop, during this long episode,

Is one reason why the United Kingdom has never, felt at home being in the European Union,
Is one reason why ram goat gnaw off he own hoof when he belly fat like onion

perhaps because of our history and geography, the European Union never felt
- we never felt, we never feel, goat is goat, is we piss up on tree trunk, we alone

3. Reasoning

It is a matter of choice.s
It is a pungent scent of cheeks parting,

so the British electorate made a choice.
chewing through rhetoric's rope to haul up and pull out,

*choose the power of domestic democratic control over pooling back control
control over we one-foot wide back yard and front stoop.*

*That is our choice
cos is we own fence*

*It does not mean we are no longer, a proud member of the family of European
nations
We two face, we goat mouth, we sweet talk for dark night access to some of your
assets*

*And it does not mean we are turning our back on Europe:
Who we never try tek for donkey, No, who we never try ride hard on she back*

*we do wish the EU to succeed,
like outside woman creeps to please*

*We can build for the United Kingdom and for the European Union
a mountain of debris for us nimble-hoof goats to climb, and gloat.*

*But we need to move on to talk about our future relationship
with razor lips like bad ram john*

*Of course we recognize that we can't leave the EU and have everything stay the
same
So we regurgitate ole talk, chew and re-chew, fling blame and cus you.*

ⁱThese poems are couplings – a poetic form invented by the poet Karen McCarthy Woolf. You can find out more about the form from her article in *mslexia* magazine - <http://mccarthywoolf.com/projects/mslexia-interview/>

Each couplet is composed from a sentence in italics extracted from political speeches followed by my response line which I reason is a form of poetic intervention.

In the poems:

Difficult of Dawns - the italics are extracted from Mayor Andy Burnham's Speech – given outside Manchester Town Hall - following the attack on an Ariana Grande Concert in Manchester Arena.

That Force-ripe Morning – the italics are extracted from Nigel Farage's 4am victory speech after the EU Referendum.

Containment - The italics are sentences creatively extracted from Hillary Clinton's Concession speech, Nov 2016.

Divorce proceedings – The italics are extracted from Theresa May's key speech on Brexit delivered in Florence in March 2019.