

DIGITAL MONSOON

Siddhartha Bose is a poet, playwright and performer based in London. His poetry has appeared in *Voice Recognition: 21 Poets for the 21st Century* (Bloodaxe, 2009), *Dear World and Everyone in It: New Poetry in the UK* (Bloodaxe, 2013) and *The HarperCollins Book of English Poetry* (HarperCollins, 2012). His first book, *Kalagora*, appeared in 2010 from Pinned in the Margins. Siddhartha has been featured on BBC Four, BBC Radio 3 and was dubbed one of the 'ten rising stars of British poetry' by *The Times*.

Siddhartha wrote and performed *Kalagora*, which completed an acclaimed run at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2011. His second show, *London's Perverted Children*, was longlisted for an Oxford Samuel Becket Theatre Trust Award. He is a Leverhulme Fellow in Drama at Queen Mary, University of London.

ALSO BY SIDDHARTHA BOSE

Kalagora (Penned in the Margins, 2010)

Digital Monsoon

Siddhartha Bose

Penned in the Margins

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CONTENTS

Kapoor's Temenos	13
LDN	15
Wicklove	18
What the Bass Said	22
Holography	25
Indigo, Bandra	31
Doctor Sahib	33
Proverbs	35
Cybosaurus	39
Mediterranean	55
The Muckworm	57
The Living and the Dead	59
Once Upon a Time in New York	62
Digital Monsoon	65
Hackney Fragments	67
Ricorso	71

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Special thanks to Tom Chivers, *il miglior fabbro*, for his invaluable guidance in editing, shaping and structuring this book.

Thanks always to my mother, Sushmita Bose, and to Maria. This book is for my grandfather, who was once a Londoner.

D.K. Bose (1911-83)

Digital Monsoon

You have to belong to a place
before you are qualified to speak

Iain Sinclair

Kapoor's Temenos

I

Dog-whoof, spin-wharf,
gluttoned like a matrix. Curves of barbed wire.
Sky-shape tarot card.

Ear-cunt on arches.

Interstellar elongation, you surprise like a
spider, crawling out of that
goon-fog of a Middlesborough morning.

Stretched like a sleeping dinosaur. Temenos.

The air hints of smack, glass-crack, guillotined head-chops. My
friends like medieval scops
turntable tales of rise, decay, fall.
Tumble-town, this once was a steel-centre (Tenter-

hook me, heathen across oceans). Now, shut-factory tunes gloam
like ghosts (I see Hamlet's teeth edging from shroud of water).
Productive darkness.

Ravens appear, crib-caged, like babies. Pubs rake like skinheads.
College hipsters artfully pour their graces. And there, above all,
watching

Temenos — dog-space divinity.
(No more steel or ships. Or slaves.)

II

And you, mangled creator of space-art — mimic-man-cosma.
You left Bombay years ago (city of chatter-gods,
mammon-fested monster.)

You journeyed from gray oceans, shifted imperially here,
fashioned an accent out of breathing blood-clots. Peeled
brown-skin from ivory-bone
with ancient knives, to pupa yourself to a demi-god,
poshed and polished.

Archetypal autocrat, scanning the fog of northern England, you
create mirrors o' yourself.

And there you are Anish bhai, locked with your visions on a foggy
Middlesborough morning —

tentacled,

cockroached,

infinite.

LDN

I

A small black-box room in Hackney Wick. Outside are beatboxers, laughing, tickling each other in sound-feathers. Spitting oracles, airpockets, patterned webs. Inside, an émigré writer wretches, tears pages of books, sticks them together piecemeal. Kills spiders for inspiration. A girl he brought home once felt instant fear, saying that in the mountains of Carthage a man living in a room within four walls is the loneliest creature on earth. He remembers and laughs with smoke in his chest.

II

The city outside is ghostly. It's night-lit, and he sees the streets through the calcified scenes in a little book he's read predicting apocalypse in London. Memories of uprisings against police control beamed over the known universe. Financial meltdown, racial strife, the homeless begging for change outside tube stations.

It snowed last week, and the ice in the streets is bone marrow. Cartilage alleys with garbage bins and the colour of council estate clotheslines. In winter nights this amputated limb of the city is full of green shadows. Piles of carcassing car-doors in empty garages, spray-can skulls washing away in corporate rain. Isolated tin can fires, menacing as sentinels in 2001. Bricks on the paper-strewn

streets reflect ghosts of the last battle. Concrete island, bludgeoned by highways. Concrete island, surrounded by the hum and scale of the city. Concrete island, revealing its stories as a peeled onion.

III

When the sun's out, the writer emerges from hibernation, runs downstairs to a cafe where they serve him chocolate brownies, warm coffee, empathy. And he has friends there. There's a Russian émigré called Anastasia who bakes bread and blueberry muffins, who's growing older by the day. There's a photographer called Milo, who waxes his moustache, slicks his bald pate with cream shoeshine. Milo insists on calling him 'boy'.

Anastasia would snicker each time she heard this. She'd see the boy immaculate, tearing tissue-strips, licking tissue-paper edges with neat saliva, gumming them together under a hail of cappuccinos, spreading these scroll-sheets on a single wooden table. She'd see him, daily, make a ritual out of eating sugar cubes like horses in a film she'd seen set in her beloved Russia, where blonde-haired nymphs emerged from medieval waters, and male voices groaned in churches. She remembered those horses, their manes and athletic necks straining in slow-motion, foaming the ire of the universe. We don't have a sense of humour she'd mutter to her apron. Behind her, glasses would break and then reassemble.

IV

This late-afternoon, during her five-minute smoke-break, Anastasia approaches, sits beside the scribbler. She watches him intently like she would a caged animal. She takes out a book, hands it over. 'For you, it's by a friend and he tells stories about London – all this...' she says, her arms reaching out to the Lea river, the red of the Orbit circling the Olympic Stadium, her arms stretching, making maps down the canal to Mile End all the way round to Hackney.

Anastasia gets up, goes back to work. The book is covered in collage, black and white images, scanned graffiti. The book is a prehistoric water-cave.