

AFTER THE FORMALITIES

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After the Formalities

Anthony Anaxagorou

Penned in the Margins

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In memory of Stella Stylianou

January 1922 – January 2018

After the Formalities

The voice is a second face

GÉRARD BAUËR

Lockstep

to those

fathers

their boys

the way it has to happen

Cause

& to the burning I say
my worry is a whole country.

I've been myself longer
than my undoing —
heavy trunk of silverware
museum glass polish
portraiture
of bent flags.

I'm here as my grandparents were
only with a moving mouth.

During empire
my people were subjects first
citizens later once the vigilantes
managed to zip up their coats

flames lambent

my grandmother died with umbrellas
outstretched in her gut my grandmother
died

to be British
is to be everywhere.

Some roots
have been in the earth
for so long
they know only to call themselves earth.

A worm's pink nipple bleeds into snow.

My birth
my mother's brown skin I'd already
filled half myself with Britannia's
air it took them a month to find my name.

Departure Lounge Twenty Seventeen

Before Trump marshalled January
to do winter's work to breach fruit

children peppered oceans
like ends of warm bread

before Harvey Weinstein Tarana Burke
spoke smoke into a litany of nuns

before functionaries filled death ledgers
with names they mispronounced

before Theresa May triggered Article 50
crouched on a wet rooftop in Lisbon

the departure lounge was heavy
with pilots who no longer trusted the sky

& my grandmother is making her way
into a forest barefoot

before floral tributes crown
a Mancunian grief

before *Celotex* expressed sympathies
for the seventy-two it turned into moons

& my grandmother is making her way
into a forest barefoot

before oceans reversed slowly into cages
like blue meat in a slaughterhouse

before the Pope prayed in apology
for the drift of the refugee crunching roaches

underfoot before Darren Osborne sat in a room
full of his mood watching *Three Girls* too loud

I wished to god
I could keep my wishing for my son

but before I turn I need to leave
the rubbish where it can be seen:

a mountain has abandoned snow
freezing hands to warn my heart

& no matter how many times I try forgetting
I still hear

my grandmother's name yelled into a forest
its bodies taking on water

chainsaws stressing honey at the root
I'm calling

but January keeps my voice for itself
dumping it where only wilderness breeds

lifting memory spilling into cloud
before washing her feet before clipping her nails
before watching her turn to face the gone