

DIASPORIC DREAMS

I do not know how to change the future, but
My pregnant heart carries the past like an
Overdue pressure of a life I'm still leading
On the inside, kicking with silent murmured
Rage that will not die and refuses to be born
Until I speak of the lives I lead across waters

I do not know how to change the future, but
My crouching back is the bridge on which
Your breath once followed its own trace back
Home to my nose that towers over my face like
A place of worship that breathes out life for us
And pauses in order to inhale simultaneously

I do not know how to change the future, but
My past glides in and out of memory to the faint
Sound of folklore told through *oud* as my mind
Blacks out from recollecting black faces that
Stand firm on my mother tongue like child soldiers
Lining up for quiet approval and recognition

I do not know how to change the future, but
My curled lips are a constant reminder that we
Come from a long line of warriors whose pounding
Words and exotic eyelashes have been silenced (*shhh*)
Into blinking children my womb has made room for
So that I will believe I once had a life, in me

– *HANNA ALI*

ABOUT THE POET

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Hanna Ali is a PhD candidate in SOAS where she specialises in African Identity; a theme that features heavily in her creative writing. A former child refugee and a full-time citizen-of-the-world, her writings are concerned with unpacking what it means to be lost. She is a member of Exiled Writers and was recently short-listed in the London Short Story Prize 2016. Her work has been published in Scarf Magazine, Public Pool, Case Stories and forthcoming in Brittle Paper.

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