

**Where a Memory Lives**



# These writings are a celebration.

They bring together a body of work written over workshop sessions with members of Headway East London, in response to Daria Martin's exhibition, *Tonight the World*. Together, the group have been writing about dreams, home, memories and the spaces in-between. Their work looks at themes such as confabulation, heritage, exile and more. Every person that we have met over the course of these workshops have taken us on a journey of sharing which reveals just how much can be made when we are given the time to sit with one another, talk and 'make a thing!'

What stood out to us when we spoke about the workshops with Headway East was the value of documenting our lived experiences, and the possibility of other people remembering things for you. As well as the fear that we embark on when we revisit certain aspects of the past, as one of our participants John said, there is an adventure too in reliving memories and allowing ourselves to access our fantasies. As a group we wrote and imagined things together like the leaves on a tree; other people's memories at the table were mixing together like autumn leaves in the wind. We hope that some of the poetry shared within this handbook gives readers a hint of the broad and dynamic range of work being created at Headway East London and we are so thankful that the Barbican Young Poets were invited into this fantastic space.

*Tice, Annie and Zahrah*

## Headway East London

For most people, brain injury begins with a predominantly medical meaning but its implications are often life-long and may shift over time. Headway East London's project is to support brain injury survivors to overcome isolation, find stability, and explore what learning their injuries might afford in context of friendship and the future, in a world where meanings are not delivered fixed. There is no knowing for certain what tools are best for this work – they too might change as we go forward. So we were delighted with both the process and the outcome of this project – proud of our community members and the way they strode so confidently into the forest of poetry, and impressed by the Young Poets who, like Virgil, were such sure-footed and lively guides. Witnessing the readings at the Barbican in March I was astonished yet again by the talent and energy of our community, to find these people, with such varied lives behind them, standing in front of an audience, sharing their love, their rage, the treasures they had brought back from the quiet landscapes of their dreams. I want to thank the Barbican and the Young Poets for making this project possible, and Daria Martin for being the spur. I want to hope for more to come: more dreams, more poetry, more questions.

Ben Mills  
Development Director  
Headway East London



## Barbican Young Poets

This programme creates a space and community for poets to meet fortnightly at the Barbican under the guidance of internationally renowned poet and performer Jacob Sam-La Rose and poet and co-tutor Rachel Long, developing their writing and performance skills to help them pursue a career in the creative arts.

## Zahrah, Annie and Tice

Zahrah Sheikh, Annie Hayter and Tice Cin shared a year together on the Barbican Young Poets programme and have since worked together on various freelance projects. Their shared ethos is that everyone is a writer, and we all deserve a chance to share our stories.

# Nigel

## Nigel on Hannah Hoch

Face with wings  
the image there has got  
twisted legs  
their hand, is a normal hand  
not his hand

## Naomi Campbell's Headshot

a good looking woman  
she does look asleep.  
she's shut her eyes,  
people would be admiring her.  
  
people would pay for her eyelashes

## Maraca

Instrument, not popular

A spoon, smooth

A hard material

Turquoise stitching

Gospel music

Being in Church

Holy, yeahhhhh

God-fearing

# Alpha Kabeja

This is a story of good things coming out from an unfortunate event. My body the canvas. My life. It started on that fateful Sunday afternoon as I was riding my bicycle, with the wind gently bruising past, thoughts of happiness and joy going to see my girlfriend, I hear the sound of screeching tires, like someone has just slammed the brakes, lights out I awoke to the sound of machines clicking and beeping, the sound of nurses chatting, the sound of the fellow unwell. Like a bookstore thief in the night has stolen all the best novels you flee like an intruder has been in and ravaged through your belongings. If you can't see what's missing how do you know? I am Alpha. Kabeja. The door of doubt is open questions flowing through my head quicker than the Blue Nile. Am I in denial? Or am I a new man? Or is this like how snakes shed their skin? I am Alpha Kabeja 2.0. Great things have come from this. Where the first skin shed, an old life went with it and where this new skin has come, so too has a new life. I am back on my bike instead of riding the roads of London I am riding the games of the Olympics like a full moon my cycle is done.

# Aminah

(Self Portrait as Wonder Woman)  
I didn't recognise who I was,  
I've lost what makes me, me

I'm a flower waiting to bloom  
I'm a butterfly struggling to break  
free from the cocoon  
Please don't judge me  
I've already sentenced myself  
Lupus doesn't debilitate me  
My hijab doesn't oppress me  
Chest x-ray proves I've got a big  
heart inside and out

and head injury = physical &  
mental disabilities  
but also = tenacity, strength & resilience  
It's your preconceived ideas that tear  
me down and harden the walls of my skin

## Home is

Home smells like a French patisserie  
Home feels like warm and safe  
Home tastes like sweet & savoury,  
flaky & melt in the mouth  
Home sounds like old memories, when mum  
was happy and sufficient.  
Home looks like contentment, of peace, free from  
trouble and worries.



## Wolf came

Wolf came when I was on top of the world  
I had three jobs, I did kickboxing, I was invincible

Wolf took my job away  
Wolf ensured my social life was devoid  
Wolf attacked me: left, right and centre  
Wolf gave me heart failure, kidney failure, meningitis

Wolf was going to kill me  
But wolf is a part of me.

## Gasp!!

Gasp!! Sweat dripping on my  
face, I'm awake now and I'm free  
free from the man trying to kill me.  
I look around me and I can't  
discern the four walls enclosing me.  
Where am I? I don't recognise the  
plain white walls, the bed I'm sleeping  
on, or the large white wardrobe and  
mirrored dresser judging me. I breathe  
aloud and rapidly which wakes mum  
up. 'Are you ok?' 'You're home now.  
You're safe.'

# John L

## Life

Told by a 'collection' of doctors, that I should have / should be dead (following the accident). Therefore my goal (since then), is to find myself again and re-birth as much of me as is possible. That is without wishing to 'go back' exactly, as that is now impossible and I no longer have the position, ability, money or intelligence that I had before. So now; remaking me as a 'whole' person is my goal and trying my best to counteract my disabilities.

## Where a memory lives

My ears -

An emotion or feeling I felt with the sound  
I have music memories

After living in Italy for three or four years my  
friends took me to La Scala in Milan for the opera.  
It's like you could hear a pin drop.

My hands -

They were my instruments to use.

I used to as a hobby work with wood, carve shapes  
and use my hands for making.

I used them to lift things when I was in work  
at a removal company.

They were my instruments to use.



## After Viewing

A lot like my original thought on 'life'.  
A 'jumbled' reflection of parts of an earlier life,  
or rather of another's 'memories'.

So; past, or part of, presence or part of,  
future possible...given the past and  
re-organising its meaning now.

All 'P's', past, presence and possible future,  
So; p is the new me...in principle

.....Perhaps!

So; 'P' is the new me  
different than before  
but maybe...  
a better place  
than now,  
a new adventure or a new Playground  
of possibilities and adventures

# Joseph Hector

## I have visions

I have visions – things that could happen  
A dream to me is something I imagine that happens  
Something that catches my eye  
I haven't dreamed for years since I was young  
I don't hardly sleep  
I think to myself:  
Why am I in this situation?  
My accident changed my life  
My accident changed my life – other people changed it for me  
I'm vulnerable with people – government people  
I don't dwell on government advice  
Just follow your mind not what other people tell you

I used to remember everything  
I believe something exists in this world  
Something exists in this world – some sort of energy.  
Some people know this.

In the West Indies they say  
don't mess about with black magic 'obeah'  
or it will destroy you.  
People don't know what they're playing with.  
Danger  
and people think you're crazy.

I'm from Dominica  
just down the way from St Lucia  
I speak broken French, all mixed up.  
I was born there.

Some dreams are a warning

# Yoki

## I was a child

For eight years or more I have been trying my best  
to wake up from this very bad dream (nightmare)

I was a child  
eating terner / date palm  
a fruit with a worm inside it

After my injury someone brought me the fruit  
I said NO  
I didn't remember why, at that time

I dreamt three years ago  
I was that child again  
I remembered my mother giving me the terner

I dreamt again  
I was the flower girl  
A bright orange dress  
I danced with my mum

This has happened in my life  
My memories visit me in my dreams





# Tiu

## Night time imaginings

Animals crammed in, struggling for breath.  
They gasp, I gasp, trying to understand why.  
I cry, I scream, is it necessary?  
Your machine has failed you, don't fill them.  
As the men in coats arrive, my cheeks sting with tears.  
I'm sorry! I sorry I couldn't save you.  
As I run and save myself, I'm piling down the centre  
of a train aisle.  
Panting, no end, continuous.

## One gloved hand holds another

I hold you. Tips to tips.  
The memory of us touching, lives on although you are gone.  
Well...  
Gone?  
Are you?  
Only in my memory, I guess. Just as you were anyway.  
Our relationship has changed.  
I still love you  
I still need you, you're just so difficult to be around.  
You're unhelpful at times and damn right annoying.  
But I love you.  
So.....  
That's it I guess.

NB: The image is of someone wearing a white glove and holding the other glove as if they were holding hands. It made me think of my own relationship with my Stroke affected arm and how I treat it.

## Do we see our bodies in our dreams?

I never see my body, so if I run, I'm running in my mind.  
I could be moving as quickly as possible for me, it is the energy, the urgency in my body. I could be in a wheelchair, on a bike, running, limping, hobbling. I know I'm moving but I see through my eyes so I do not see or conceive my physical body, just my mind.

It's taken me 18 years since my stroke to come to terms with my illness. I wouldn't have it any other way now.  
It's my identity. It has afforded me so many joys that I might never have had the chance to experience, had I not become disabled. It does not define me but it is me and I am glad of it.

## Where and what memories lie in my body:

Head: Picnics, Family car picnics, Lory - Family - Cadover Bridge, Stroke  
Heart/ Chest/ Gut: Theatre, Lory - Family, classical singing at school, Dad leaving, Pradeep,  
Left Arm: Stroke, Dislocated shoulder, broken finger by my brother  
Left Leg: Stroke



# Lobna

## Backgammon and Dice

The sunflowers were longer than I. She climbed a few steps. I heard a broken mirror. Men. He was gone. A breath. But we left again. A highway. A military field I could see from the window with no army. The rails with no trains. The train stations were backgammon and coffee with cardamom inside on small tables, and men hubble-bubbling. The railroad covered with second hand stuff. Once upon a time, the train went back home.

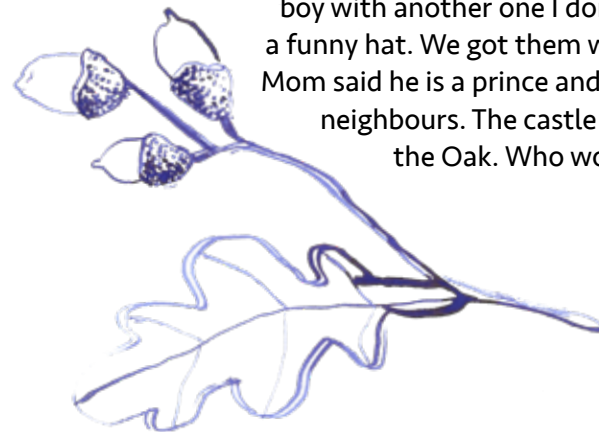
## an imaginary sniper

I want a mirror of my brain. I took my glasses off and closed my eyes to see the streets. I haven't been there for years. Been stuck in mere ignorance at no land since teenage. For years been checking for every possible way to get out. So stuck couldn't leave without a scar. It wasn't a choice. It just happened. Things happen out of nowhere. Good things happen with good people. Perhaps it was a natural selection for me to move on, to change place and to rest on loneliness.

It was almost a 'dementia of home' once I arrived at no land. I was still a child.

## The King and The Oak

I woke up. I'm not a fan of waking up. I like dreams better even if bitter. It was a sunny day. Not summer yet, neither cold nor hot. Perfect –as it could be – that even weather wouldn't be a subject. I can see the sun between the branches lying on a tree swinging. My grandfather with his huge belly is sitting on the grass across my mother. She is not thin but not fat, chubby, perhaps, blond with short hair. Both are trying to agree what to cook first on the barbeque. Mom is a pro she knows how to put the fire on in a few minutes. It is an Oak. One can park a few cars under it. It is an ancient tree. It should have been there for thousand of years. Swinging around I had a lucid dream of a king sleeping under the Oak before crossing the canal to Cordoba. Next day the Parrots woke me up shouting and swearing. The King is coming. The King is coming. I ran to the door. The Parrots were swearing in Turkish. Fuck You! Fuck You! I went outside. My mom was talking. A car had parked under the house with two young men and a soldier. Mom was laughing. 'Go get some old newspapers from the library' she said to me and I will get some water in a bottle! I looked for a few seconds to who was there; a young blond boy with another one I don't remember and a soldier with a funny hat. We got them what they needed then they left. Mom said he is a prince and they are playing a joke with the neighbours. The castle was on the top of the hill above the Oak. Who would know he would be the king.




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**barbican**

**GUILD  
HALL  
SCHOOL**

Designed and illustrated by Phoebe Nightingale





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