

In memory of Christof Bon, one of the three Barbican architects.

Little is known about him despite having been one of the most influential architects in postwar Britain. Even his name is often misspelled in English, as is my own. Like me, Bon hailed from Switzerland, country of snow, trains, and small towns. He was born in my family's hometown of St. Gallen; like my family, his relocated to Zurich, where he studied at my alma mater.

He then left Switzerland for London to create something bigger. Just like me.

Gentler Climes

I am a winter's son,
born on a Thursday to the first

snow in the final dredges
of the year. It was 1921

and the cold pressed its white
hand upon the window like a lover

saying goodbye
at the train station, silently

crying out, out-
side the sidewalks whirling

with people, but the people without
won't hear my cries.

Fears have many ways to shatter
if poured in concrete on a foreign isle

to rebuild the mountains
I left behind. It was 1959

and the Smoke blessed its waste-
land to grow into crags that hover

over beryl lakes to dye,
from the train station defiantly

climbing up, up
high the highwalks curling

through a city within a city throughout
which millions rise.

I am a builder undone,
forlorn in a grey maze that guards

a lung of art with brutal edges,
if not for Ariadne's thread of red

geraniums in windows that under-
stand home like a rover

staying to die
at the destination. It was 1999

and tears have many states of matter
but none of them do.

A son of winter
knows snow

is the loneliest of them all:
a skyful of flakes falling

together but forever
apart,

only to vanish
in spring, like a lover

on a train bound for gentler climes
than me.