

TLC Showcase

HAFSAH ANEELA BASHIR

Introduction to Hafsah's poetry Selected	2
Poetry	3
About the Writer	7

Introduction to Hafsah's poetry

Much of where I am now in my writing career is owed to collectives like Commonword and Manchester Muslim Writers who supported me during my writing journey. I had just finished my Masters in Postcolonial Literary & Culture after having my children and decided to take a poem called *Patience* to a writer's group. Lacking in confidence but with a passion to perfect this craft, I really benefitted from the support I received in the room that evening. Writers of colour sharing their offerings of poems, short stories, autobiographies and scripts felt inclusive and warm.

Later that year I came across The Literacy Consultancy where Martin De Mello from Commonword told me about the Free Read Report TLC offered to writers. I sent my poetry manuscript off with trepidation and received a detailed and thorough critique by writer Dzifa Benson whose insight was both eye-opening and affirmative for me. Her feedback helped me shape and re-work my poetry, making me think much more deeply about the craft. That was in 2015. When she stated at the end of the report, *I look forward to seeing your name and work in an anthology or magazine in the not too distant future*, I hadn't ever envisioned that three years later I would have a full debut poetry collection published by Burning Eye Books.

This year I won the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship 2019 and Dzifa Benson and I crossed paths again, full circle. The value of mentors cannot be underestimated and I want to honour Dzifa Benson and the many pillars of support I have encountered in that journey.

The Celox And The Clot is a collection that explores central themes of love, relationships, the politics of conflict and the many problematic aspects of the world we move in today. It flits between the private and the public, between uncertainty of relationships under strain to the tragedy of war, between everyday joy and fundamental injustices. Much of my collection is obsessed with naming people who have been reduced to statistics and sound bites in the media. It's a way for me to challenge complacency in our lived experience, to call out fear and hatred whether that is global or local. It takes its title from *Drone*, a poem I penned about children caught up in war. The term 'celox' which I have often been asked about, is a powder used in war zones to stem a wound from bleeding and is a metaphor for the spilling of expression throughout the collection. The poems are tender, poignant and fierce in my bid to unapologetically examine our human condition and the conflicts that arise within us.

Selected Poems by Hafsa Aneela Bashir

TO YOU

Is it going to be?

the comfort of lingering cigarette smoke

or the way our discarded shoes point

in different directions

the blue mug brewing yesterday's tea

on the worktop

and the teaspoon you said takes the heat away

the disfigured toothbrush,

your unworking watch with its cruel hands

stare intently

God told us we are like garments to one another

so today I am wearing six of your tops

carrying all of you with me

like the time you lifted me and my muddy wellies

out of that ditch

I needed to tell you
that the heavy rug has moved, that paint stain
you caused when we decorated this place
together, peeps at me like a great aubergine eye
I sit on different sofas and watch it cry

Oh and the bed still smells of your scent

I have decided to keep it that way
half expecting to hear your faint snores
or see your rising shape under the covers

and the whisper

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raajioon

THE WAR-TORN CHILD

I will tell God everything
The sharp metal pieces
Taken out of my stomach
Will all come with me

I will tell God everything
The men with the guns
And the aeroplanes of fire
Will all get into trouble

I will tell God everything
And ask if the lightening in the sky
Was him taking photos
If not, I'll give him my drawings

I will tell God everything
That Mama's face was gone
But I found Baba's feet
And put them together like shoes

ALU PARATEH

My son wide-eyed and curious
stands near the kitchen stove,
a smoky tawa spitting till piping hot
ready to bake thin potato-filled paratehs.

He stares at his dadi-jaan's asbestos hands
tirelessly providing – used to the heat,
places his hands on her shoulders,
and says, *Teach me to make an alu paratah!*

From my prayer mat in the dining room
I hear her dish up firm words of advice,
It's a woman's job to cook and a man's to earn,
And the lick of the fire starts its slow burn.

While I'm alive, she says, I'll make them,
And when I don't, your mother will,
And when she can't, your wife will,
Her beliefs as perfect as her round rotis.

About the Writer

Hafsah Aneela Bashir is a Manchester-based poet, playwright & performer originally from the East end of London. With a natural love of reading and writing from a young age she noticed the gaps in terms of BAME representation in the world around her. With a passion to promote creative agency she founded Outside The Frame Arts with co-director Nikki Mailer to champion voices outside the mainstream and challenge the gatekeepers of knowledge. Working with marginalized and underrepresented communities, Hafsah delivers creative workshops around identity and empowerment and is passionate about promoting the arts as a tool for social change.



Her work has featured in anthologies published by Crocus Books and her debut poetry collection, *The Celox And The Clot* was published by Burning Eye Books last year. Her recent work includes a Memories of Partition monologue with The Royal Exchange Theatre exploring her grandmother's experience of the 1947 Partition of India and a PUSH Festival commission at HOME, Mcr, this year with her play *Cuts Of The Cloth* exploring the effects of the war on terror for Muslim women.

This year she was one of three winners awarded the prestigious Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship 2019. She is also a mother, a writer-in-residence with Manchester Literature Festival, a Leader Of Tomorrow with the Artistic Directors Leadership Programme, an Associate Artist with Oldham Coliseum Theatre and a Supported Artist at The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester.

She blogs at <http://hafsahaneelabashir.wordpress.com/> when she has time and tweets at [@Hafsah_A_Bashir](https://twitter.com/Hafsah_A_Bashir) & [@aartsOTF](https://twitter.com/aartsOTF) when she doesn't. *The Celox And the Clot* is available to purchase from <https://burningeye.bigcartel.com/product/the-celox-and-the-clot-by-hafsah-aneela-bashir>

Buy Hafsah's work on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Celox-Clot-Hafsah-Bashir/dp/1911570501>