

hearing proudly that you have none
of those who sweat the story

the punch-line sweeter in the gut
long before it's written?

who reached brixton
looked back across salt water
in fealty to the poisoned heart?

circa one fine day
to see us cutting off our body

since the time that we were taken
when will we haunt a body that doesn't drift and rot?

Jay Bernard

Jay Bernard is from London and works as a writer and film programmer at BFI Flare (London's LGBT film festival). They are the author of three pamphlets and have been featured in numerous anthologies and magazines, including *TEN: The New Wave*, *Voice Recognition*, *Out of Bounds: Black British Writers and Place* and *Flicker and Spark: A Contemporary Queer Anthology*. Jay was Poet-in-Residence at the archive George Padmore Institute in 2016, out of which came the poems for their poetry collection *Surge* (2019), based on the New Cross Fire of 1981 where fourteen young black people lost their lives. The book was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection and the T. S. Eliot Prize, among others. It also formed the basis for their acclaimed multimedia show *Surge*, performed at the Albany in Deptford, south London, in July 2019.

A recording of Jay Bernard reading this poem can be found on the Writers-Mosaic website at writersmosaic.org.uk

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