

Past, Present, Future

Jeffrey Boakye

'Midwinter spring is its own season'

— T. S. Eliot

I've been young for half a lifetime, and now I've re-arrived at a state of infancy: it's really no surprise. This is what it brings to me: a minor shock, nothing major, for I know I'm not entering maturity. Older than I ever was, but I will never be younger than I am right now, and now's incredibly... fleeting. I'm greeting the Never Me with the Ever Me; they're meeting, unsteadily.

Delegates – they shake hands and celebrate. Never late to make plans but hesitate over the future; imaginary and elusive. We're under pressure from the future and it never waits. And the past? Stays in place and never shakes, solidifies in memory (you cannot hide from what has been). Meditate on the future-past that never waits. Try to catch the present if you can but you'll be ever late...

The ever-present (also known as an eternity) interrogates the mortality of you and me eternally. We're living in between the past and future constantly, impossibly eternal but moribund simultaneously. And it's a shame that we're so hung up on the way that we used to be, want to be, used to want to be. Truthfully? That's about as important as...you to me? I don't know. I mean, usually we're satisfied completely with the things that we can touch and see but, honestly, the weight of history is just too much for me. But at least it happened, so it has to be tangible to some degree and rooted in reality. Unlike the future or the present (which is transitory), so never worry much about what all your future plans could be. Because your

plans are for not-yet-existent nows and you can't plan for now because now is always happening.

Here's a post-mortem of all things I've ever thought, and the raw thoughts that fall from my pen until my pages catch them. Courting ideas like young men and neighbours' daughters, my dumb pen starts speaking, releasing thoughts in zany orders. I'm still looking for purchase – I might place an order, waiting patiently for delivery to grace my door and ring the bell. It sounds the death knell of my creative water shortage. No doubt that my thoughts are finally made to order.

Drought season comes and goes like vague acquaintances, and when I'm waiting for the rain it feels like I'm in stasis. It's a living death, creative plague, aborted phrases made of shit. I look at them like, 'Is this it? I thought my thoughts were laced with wit?' They are, but wit is insufficient for my purposes. I've raised the bar beyond the level of my simple words and it's a hurdle, it's a challenge, it's a verbal hurl of words and it's a...

...

...dot, dot, dot... dot...

An ellipsis fits. Because it's ongoing. And I'm not slowing. Moment by moment, try to hold it but it's not holding. Trying to hold it is like trying to hold infinity. Midwinter Spring is the season that we're living in.

Jeffrey Boakye

Jeffrey Boakye is a writer, teacher and music enthusiast originally from Brixton, London. He has a particular interest in issues surrounding education, race and popular culture. Jeffrey has taught English in London secondary schools and sixth-form colleges since 2007, previously working in journalism and copywriting, after graduating with a degree in English Literature.

His first book, *Hold Tight: Black Masculinity, Millennials and the Meaning of Grime*, is recognised as one of the first seminal books about grime music, published by Influx Press in 2017. *Black, Listed: Black British Culture Explored* is his second major book, published under Dialogue Books in 2018. He is also the co-author of *What is Masculinity? Why Does it Matter? And Other Big Questions*. He has contributed articles and comment pieces to publications including the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and the Royal Society of Arts Journal. After moving from London in 2018, Jeffrey now lives in East Yorkshire with his wife and two sons.

A recording of this talk can be found on the WritersMosaic website at

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