

reh-collec-shun or alphabet amnesia

you will forget how to speak. fuh-get how tuh speak
like we. how to switch b e t w e e n
we patwa and the English we receive from The Queen. when your grandfather
dies you will pick three—no, tree—purple bruises from the fig tree in his
backyard in queens. he recited shakespeare, sang country-western songs. you
try desperately to pull his english back to shore. his IV line disappears in your
dreams that night, the bruises turn into figs you both eat. bodies bear the fruit
of the soul's pains and yours is an eternal hunger, yours is a meh-belly-cyan-
full-fas'-enough kind of hunger. we english is a special english he says. in we
english tree mean 3 an tree is the mango tree back home in we yard. nah badda
ax where the h gone. it playin hide an seek. that is why we 'tory does sound so
'tweet. even letters need to go on holiday. we twis and we turn—we tuhn—the
English She give we into someting else. that is the cruel magic of diaspora,
of migration. that is how yuh tek yuh eye and pass somebody. abee english
does suffer—suffa—from amnesia too. plenty language it done fuh-get, plenty
language it t(h)row overboard on the ships that ferried black and brown bodies
across the atlantic, the kalapani to el dorado. some languages swim, others
sink. so at his funeral you drop your h's and exorcise your r's when you sing
his eulogy. you dispel every elementary school teacher who held your tongue
hostage, your language captive. you remember, yuh reh-collect that in we house
the alphabet does behave a lil bit different. our english, we english, abee english,
abeeeese english was conceived in the middle of the sea, born infinite times
between stalks of sugarcane and rice, mixed with new world dirt blood sweat
cries laughs screams moans. it taste sweet sweet. and like shame it will stay
stuck in between yuh teet(h) in this life and the next, and the next and the