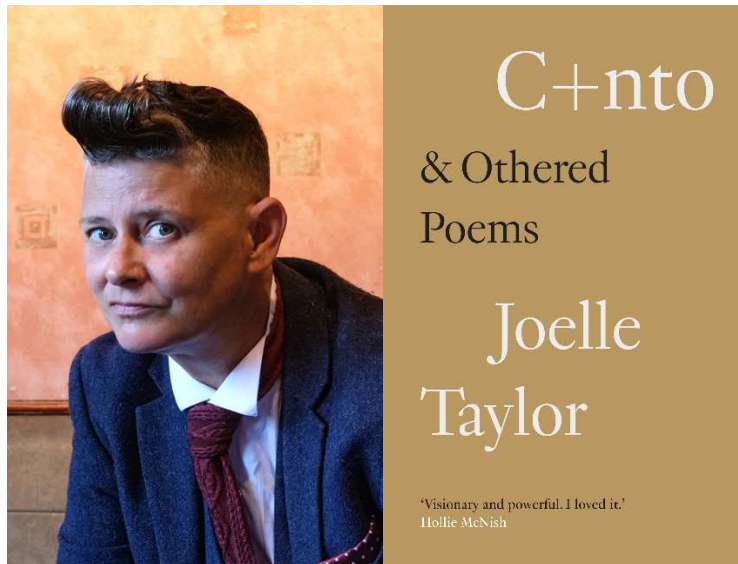


C+nto & Othered Poems

by Joelle Taylor



Joelle Taylor is an award-winning poet, playwright, author and editor. She has performed across the UK as well as internationally, both for the British Council (Zimbabwe, Brazil, Botswana, Australia and Singapore) and on solo projects across Europe. She has been anthologised widely in English, Portuguese, Polish, Spanish, Estonian, Finnish, Arabic and Ndebele; and her work is a Subject for Study on the OCR GCSE English syllabus. A former UK slam champion, she founded the national youth slam championships SLAMBassadors in 2001 for the Poetry Society and was its Artistic Director and National Coach until 2018. As an educator she has lead workshops and residencies in schools, prisons, youth centres, refugee groups, and other settings for organisations including the Poetry Society, the British Council, Arvon Foundation and English PEN. She featured on TEDx Talks and Outsider Lectures, and was recently awarded a Southbank Centre Change Maker prize, in recognition of her life-changing work on the national youth slams. She has a Fellowship of the Royal Society of the Arts and was longlisted for the 2017 Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship. She is the host of London's premier night of poetry and music Out-Spoken and a member of the curation team.

Reviews

'A real treat ... in the vivid bar-set poems, Taylor brings a close-knit community to life ... inventive, powerfully moving work.' - *The Telegraph*

'Absolutely incredible ... A celebration and a tribute to the dyke bars and the butches who left their mark, this book reminds the reader that to exist as we do is a form of protest. This is work that should not be missed.' - *Diva Magazine*, Book of the Month

'*C+nto* is the best of hybrids. A reclamation and a proclamation. A book and a performance. A roll call and a remembrance. A tribute and a critique, not just for the Lesbian community,

but for anyone who has had to struggle to establish their life and identity. A powerful celebration of an important culture.’ - Roger Robinson

Round One

the body as battleground

you fall miss your body entirely land somewhere
in enemy territory behind the lines your body a
foreign country you cannot get a visa for your skin
a parachute caught in tree branches you awaken
in no man’s land gunfire from over the horizon &
women are crucified on hashtags across the dark hills.

//

your trench is crowded with dead women wearing
faces that try to escape them the clothes of someone
you once knew there are landmines buried deep beneath
your skin & no one understands them *tread softly*
when you walk across me in between battle cry &
bedroom is this sticky quiet this no man’s land.

//

men explode when you least expect it.

//

all these lifetimes searching for body.

Scene One

EXTERIOR night. A main road in London.

LX1: Streetlamps watch a woman pass & text each other.

FX1: The sound of a door opening into a chest cavity. A lone woman walks briskly, head down & holding invisible bouquets. Ahead of her is a hunched building with its hands in its pockets, bracketed by gossiping fairy lights.

LX2: A neon sign flashes its pink dilate. *Maryville*, the sign says. The woman pushes open the door & enters her own body. At the bar she orders a drink and when it arrives it is her breath. Music is playing. It is the sound of someone being listened to. She notices that she is sitting at every table. When the woman asks her to dance

the whole of her past stands up to dance with her; her classmates, her teachers, the manager of the shop she worked in over Christmas, the newspaper proprietor, the street she grew up on, an adjacent town, her parents and grandparents, the kid who waited for her after school. The song ends. The world opens. Venus rises.

A Lesbian Walks into a Bar

o holy church of
Maryville on our knees
by Sunday looking up
our own skirts the tables
are a strange atoll
each with its own
customs but we share
a root language a lesbian
walks into a bar or
a bar walks into a
lesbian how it is to
arrive what it is to
become o holy i stand
at the bar side knowing
when i look up i will be
serving myself & when i
am done that i will take
the drinks to a table
where i am waiting
& later on, i'll
give glad eye
to a girl & she
will be me.

Discussion Ideas

- Do you think 'Round One – body as battlefield' might be a metaphor for female puberty? Is it one that speaks to you?
- What is the connection between 'Round One' and this poem
<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/he-wishes-cloths-heaven/>?
- [LX = lighting direction – a note on a theatre script, FX = sound direction] The poet describes these 'scene' poems as visual poems? What does that term mean to you?

- What actors would you cast in this scene, for its stage or film version?
- What does the title 'A Lesbian Walks into a Bar' set you up to expect from its poem? Does it deliver?

Other books by Joelle Taylor

Songs My Enemy Taught Me (Out-Spoken Press, 2017)

The Woman Who Was Not There (Burning Eye Books, 2014)

Ska Tissue (Mother Foucault Press, 2011)

If you liked Joelle Taylor, try ...

- Sabrina Mafouz
- Melissa Lee Houghton
- Lisa Luxx

Joelle Taylor online

www.joelletaylor.co.uk