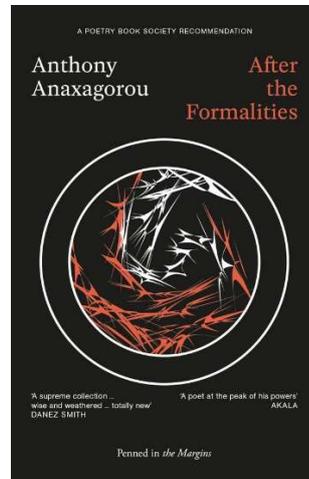
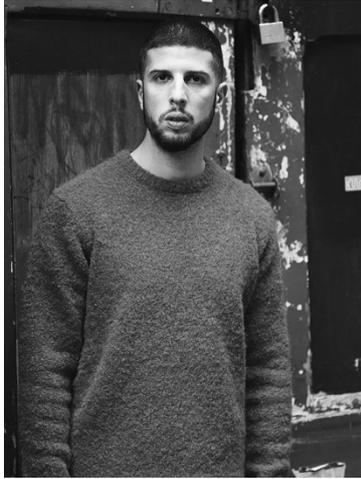


After the Formalities **by Anthony Anaxagorou**



Anthony Anaxagorou is a British-born Cypriot poet, fiction writer, essayist, publisher and poetry educator. His poetry and fiction have appeared on BBC Newsnight, BBC Radio 4, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky Arts, and have been published in POETRY, The Poetry Review, Poetry London, Granta, The Rialto, Oxford Poetry and The Feminist Review. In 2019 he was made an honorary fellow of the University of Roehampton. He has toured extensively in Europe and Australia. Anthony is artistic director of Out-Spoken, a poetry and live music night in London, and publisher of Out-Spoken Press. *After the Formalities* is his breakthrough poetry collection.

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Reviews

“After the Formalities is a supreme collection. Anaxagorou’s lyrics, mapped over expansive interior and historical landscapes, feels to me as wise and weathered, and it feels to be bringing something totally new to my ear. Solid. The Self and The West catch the hardest blows, but Anaxagorou throws hands critical, bloodied, and tender all so skilfully you can’t help but come out feeling rocked too. The ghosts that haunt this collection have bless it and we are blessed for it.” (Danez Smith)

“Formal, experimental, dextrous, aural, democratic, radical; what Anaxagorou does in this collection breaches paraphrase. These poems work as poems should: enacting deep thought towards philosophies, and they make me hopeful.” (Rachael Allen)

A Line of Simple Enquiry

follows in the traditional vein of questioning when one encounters a person or persons they perceive to be other. The famous public autopsy, at a dinner party, art gallery, gymnasium

or local bakery. Five words light as a baby's finger. But where really? The taxonomy of difference, along with the need or entitlement to ask so politely, with one hand resting on the elbow, displaying caution, not wanting to infer, with emphasis on assume, as in to avoid causing offence, becoming more scrutinized, every feature up against the light, your body under their knife, the question again, so as to deduce, so as to allow the remarkable recalling of definitive histories, Ibn Khaldun, Mansa Musa, Phillis Wheatley & Al Afghani, your people, as in extraordinary, as in don't take this the wrong way, as in don't take this to heart, but it's all so fascinating, an appreciation if you will, to announce so subtly, without hubris, the panoply of books read, on the way we eat & live & love & bury our dead, & really it's all just so interesting, as if interest were a desperate thing scurrying across a mass grave, an artefact snatched from an old warrior's hand, neat wall text in a city museum, to cast iron eyes over, incredulity, you don't look like, the aquiline nose was the giveaway, skin thicker than animal sex that never cracks under god. All those nuances bloating the unfished ghosts of the sea, & all that hair, is that natural? Is that yours? Is it real? To touch what I own. Take what I see. There's a reason why my daddy told me to keep a stone between my fists when I fight, & really it's all too complicated, & everything's already been said much better, by people who have it much worse, but look, is this your attempt to bid me farewell in my tongue? Are you here to help carry the burden of my name? Are your hands strong enough to lug it? We all know the stuck fishbone never meant any harm. Is that your hand still on my elbow?

How Men Will Remember Their Fathers

As protagonists encumbered by their role,
chain smoking the innards of a living room parish,
decades spent with arms crossed, rejecting fragility,
lifting pints up to their confessional box.

Before we were men we would study the slopes
of shattered furniture, heed how the commands
of our fathers would curdle with a cruel logic.
We were boys then, standing beneath them as detritus,

picking from their petulance ways to parrot their alpha,
vituperative chessmen with only grey slippers on,
dreading another staircase war drum; the generals
we were unable to tell because of their shell-shocked

Jesus. Father, I can fit my childhood into a fist,
I can name the times I stayed silent when you
thundered there were only two types of people,
winners and losers, forgetting the belt, the shoe,

the eyewitness.

Sympathy for Rain

Only a flood will be keen to want more
cities run you into their concrete cage
umbrellas fatten to confirm your waste
roof tiles keep you only for your slickness
spectacles bury you in a tissue's
neat secret leather jokes at your attempt
little refugees of somewhere cloud camped
in stained-glass windows what thug-grey did this
even when you soak through cloth to beg skin
you're shaken off left to dry into loss
a slant of earth still motions your saving
a slug slow as a monk carries you up
asking red to soften around your name
until you are nowhere but there again.

Discussion Ideas

- Who are Ibn Khaldun, Mansa Musa, Phillis Wheatley and Al Afghani in 'A Line of Simple Enquiry'? Did you need to look them up? If so, what will you do with the knowledge now?
- Who is this poem for? People with their hands on other people's elbows, or people with other people's hands on their elbows? Which sort do you consider yourself to be?
- Why isn't 'How Men Will Remember Their Fathers' called 'How I Will Remember My Father'?
- Does 'How Men Will Remember Their Fathers' include God in the group of fathers?
- Insomniacs who listen to a rain app to get to sleep – would memoirising 'Sympathy for Rain' and repeating it to yourself also do the trick? What are its lullaby qualities?

Other books by Anthony Anaxagorou

Heterogenous (Out-Spoken Press, 2016)

The Blink That Killed The Eye (Jacaranda Books, 2014)

If you liked Anthony Anaxagorou, try ...

- Joelle Taylor
- Raymond Antrobus
- Tony Harrison

Anthony Anaxagorou online

<https://anthonyanaxagorou.com/>