

POETRY

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Fondue

A. K. BLAKEMORE

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‘A dazzling and immensely readable collection.’
—Andrew McMillan

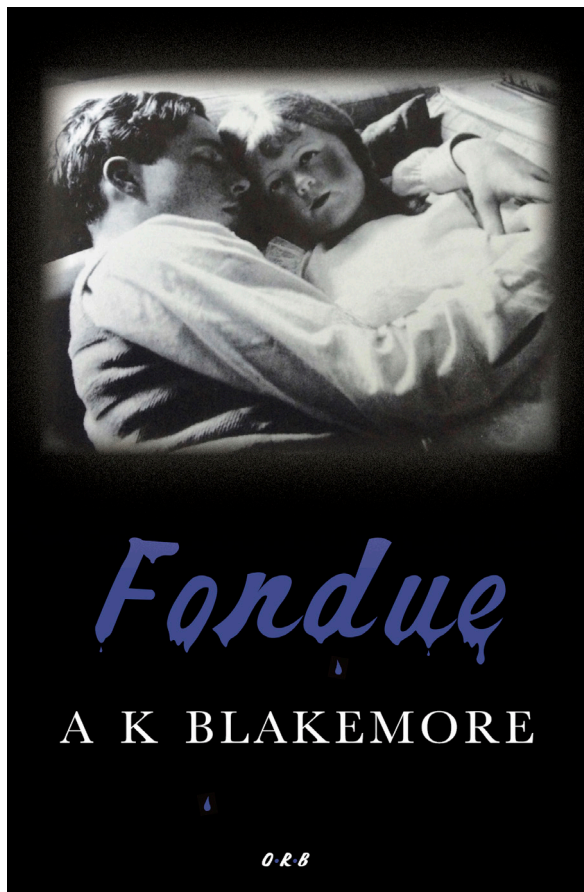
‘never say / the best of summer’s gone’, the poem asks, a plea for permanence that sustains throughout *Fondue*, the second collection by A. K. Blakemore. In these louche, candid poems, bearing the marks of Mary Ruefle, Emily Dickinson and The Smiths, the inner life prowls, smoking a cigarette, as the fantasies of sex and violence are allowed to play out in the subjugations that have long been the poet’s concerns. Here they are exposed, interrogated, attacked and cauterised with a fierce melancholy. In *Fondue*, the prototypes of personal history and regret – ex-lovers and friends, snatched and startling nights of intimacy and rage – are pinned by the investigative presence of Blakemore’s syntax and semantic reach. Here are romances – for places, for people, for the self – voiced with doubt and survival. These lines understand their power to manipulate: ‘this is a poem about my mouth / intended to draw attention / to my mouth’, the title poem instructs. *This is what I like; this is what I don’t like* – ‘i want you / like a scorpion down my shirt’; ‘i wanted to show it to you’; ‘i want you to describe the pain’ – there is a plaintive charisma in the ability to ask for the things a body needs, as well as the things it needs to understand about other bodies in order to coexist. For all of Blakemore’s defiance, the savagery and storm, this world holds a prismatic, surprising beauty; the beauty of rain-washed streets, of come-down mornings, of the potential for tenderness in the brutality of love and play. The poet who can strike so fiercely at the times when ‘truth is just a sharp thing you stand on in the night’ can also conclude ‘but god i love the world. the things you do’. Tigerish, impetuous, exacting and never self-pitying, *Fondue* reaffirms Blakemore’s place on the barricades.

Praise for the author:

‘... The poems seem to speak for a generation bored of its idols, somehow turning disaffected youth’s trademark ennui into something altogether more celebratory.’ —Emily Berry

‘Blakemore’s power as a poet is due not only to her unwillingness to be obvious. She is unfailingly accurate, aiming her words with the precision of a sniper... Blakemore’s language is so exact, her imagery so vital and vitalizing, that the poems prove difficult to shake off once they are read.’ — TLS

‘At times uncomfortably earnest, full of swagger and often gifted with a snarl, A. K. Blakemore’s *Humbert Summer* is a first collection refreshingly sure of its own register, balanced deftly between the lyric tradition and the contemporary world, ambitious in its poetic range and – all too rare for poetry in the UK – utterly resistant to the parochial.’ — Ahren Warner



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