

## Coming Apart by Francesca Lynes

Your land is coming apart, first a single thread loose,  
Picked by one of the younger ones, before he knows

The whole  
side of  
the hill  
rips in  
two.

A woman  
remains there.  
She will not  
leave.

She clings onto the tree trunk, her mouth stretched, close to splitting at the seams I will not leave.

The dirt spreads: tan and maroon reaching the ash blue sky,  
The red of her top: a gash, a sign.

I do not know what she so desperately protects.  
The land that was here before, now a tapestry unwoven; too muddled to see the colours and shapes.

What happened to your once embroidered land?

Why did I never see this? Why did I only see the ruin and the rips?

Unmake that hatred  
Unmake that tragedy  
Make the past that I was never shown.

From the dust, show me the fingers of the olive branches when  
they reached out,  
when they grew.

Teach me to make za'atar, to pick the olives, to cut the cucumbers and tomatoes on your breakfast table.

This was only love once; untangle it from the mess they made to cover it.

Show me how to embroider your land once more,  
Show me how to see it since I never saw how it was before.

---

## Reflective commentary

I chose Mohammed El-Kurd's poem 'Bulldozers Undoing God' because of the emotions it evoked. El-Kurd encourages the reader to grieve the country's loss by contrasting the domestic foundations of its reality: 'breakfast table', 'za'atar', with the intense tragedy it endures: 'every footstep is a grave'. In my poem I wanted to express remorse at not knowing this country when it was beautiful: only ever seeing it in disrepair. This reminded me of war-torn countries in the media and how we know so little about many countries, particularly their value until they have been through a tragedy. This adds to the dangerous single view of many countries outside of Britain as less stable, less valuable, when in fact we were never shown them before, contributing to the dangerous myth of Western superiority. I thought about the word 'war-torn' and visualised a country ripping. This inspired me to use an embroidery motif, as did the dressmaking allusion: 'corseting the tree's waist'; the reference to 'embroidered destinies' and the verbs 'stitched' and 'untangling'. I hope the original country is symbolised by a complex, colourful and beautiful tapestry, hard to rebuild after destruction. Structurally, I was inspired by El-Kurd's use of line indents to create meaning. For example, I aimed to visually represent the tearing of the hill in two with the woman who remains, mirroring an image from El-Kurd's poem. At the end of my response, I used many imperative verbs to convey the urgency I felt writing this poem - why do we not see countries before ruin? What does this say about our view of them? Overall, I want my poem to leave readers with a slightly unsettling feeling, because of the tragedy but also because they are confronted with their views of other countries, particularly before their coming apart.

---