

# The Substrate of a Rose

At the water's edge wild grass  
foliate rustle, the quarter moon

bugles a wisp of lit, clouds  
star in their own tattering,

emerald ducks stab bills, paddle,  
manoeuvre shapes past dusk,

yearn for lips. January is an  
orphaned liturgy, the oleander

months off pink, a trailing censer  
salt-and-pepper mumble under

the chin, scratch the cold injustice  
of now, the unknown stein, what

mead or manoeuvre shall spring  
come in when the sorrel discover

benches cleared of moss? An austere  
calyx dressed as grandfather time

once walked Hall Green, his  
rosewood caning each asphalt

inch, the sepal of each flower  
disturbed in the thud of wanting

answers to lost hearing, sight  
wavering towards the unheard

green rose drifting to the edge  
of a pious evening. What piety

made me run at sixteen my  
fastest, eyes wanting to be



a song, laminae of the gales  
digging elk-bones? Now the aim

is to understand mortar, all its  
beguiling viscosity, why the Tang

smothered rice flour into theirs,  
how Anatolian mosques withstood

comets and the under-earth, rise  
as minarets feigning death. And,

how shall I expiate my sins past  
the fiqh of want, susurrate

an old world tome, make out  
the genus of flies peppering

the green rose on the banks  
of Acheron? I am still moved

by song. Why? The honeydew  
untasted rubs a whiskered chin

of primrose, benediction, the birth  
of hope and despair, I baptise you

with air. Thou shalt fall in love with  
the dryad, plant acorns, fixity is daal.

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Taz Rahman has lived in Cardiff for thirty years. His first poetry collection *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* will be published by Seren Books in February 2024.

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Supported by

**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

