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## A PLACE FOR POETRY

### Teaching *Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan*

#### *i. London E7*

Walking to work from the tube,  
 the High Road rattles with metal shutters  
 rolling upwards. Pavements become coastlines  
 from elsewhere: boxes of plantains, dudhi, arvee;  
 hunks of watermelon piled in a crate.  
 Long rolls of sari cloth lean against shopfronts,  
 offcut squares in baskets. One day I buy one,  
 unfold it in class like a map, pass it round.  
 Its blue is that of schoolroom globes;  
 silver threads cross it like shipping lanes.  
 I ask about their aunts, their gifts  
 from Lagos, Ilford, Manila:  
 lifelines cast from somewhere to now.

#### *ii. Cumbria*

I drive to work down hedgerowed lanes,  
 recycling lesson plans in my head.  
 This morning, I found the fabric,  
 a fragment from a decade ago,  
 pressed in a ringbinder marked *Poems*.  
 Different pupils run it through their fingers.  
 I show them Googled images  
 of salwaar kameez, Lahore.  
 We are answering questions –  
*Discuss. Compare and contrast.*  
 I try to answer them, see myself,  
 then and now, staring through vertical blinds  
 in Year 10 English classrooms.

*Karen Lockney*

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