

MdF I

Malika de Fernandez was killed in 1961. Her husband denied the murder until, in 1983, peat-cutters found a portion of her skull in the nearby Lindow Moss.

He had killed her and buried her dismembered body in the bog, 300 yards away from their house. He confessed and was arrested.

The skull was sent away for examination by Detective Inspector George Abbott. A professor of archaeology at the University of Oxford carbon dated the remains. They were 1,700 years old.

MdF II

Can you believe I thought this was a funny story? Or not funny, really, but a good story. A kind of cosmic justice. The ancient body rises up through the bog, brings the guilt to an instant boil, hisses 'confess'. A metaphor? The thing that lets some by-product phantom out – the honest confession under false evidence.

I didn't think about Malika's body, still in Lindow moss.

MdF III

I decide to make a painting of Malika

Dusty sings 'You Don't Have to Say You Love Me'

I write myself the Dusty Formula

You don't

You don't

You don't

Just –

You don't

Just

You don't

I will

Believe me!

Believe me!

It's many nos, and a volta.
(Every painting becomes a no)

I see it everywhere
Nanci Griffiths too;

It's not
It's not
It's not
I am just

MdF IV

I'm digging for your body - the real one.

I have found many things which are not your body. Everywhere I look beneath the grass. Forms that protrude, incline, lean into the earth. Cricket trousers singed from the striking of a ball against a vesta box in 1908. A child's mouthguard - for a moment I'd hoped it was your ear. Hooves like jellied fruit, never curled under a standing weight.

Only more bodies - Montie Montana and his rope, the one he used on Eisenhower in 1953. A child paralysed by whistling. A bird that flew home with an African spear inside.

I hit metal, an emlen funnel. Within I hear something slide, delayed, a beat behind my hands as I lean the drum forward and back. Another bird.

MdF V

I know you are somewhere, perfect,
your skin tanned to a new brindle.

Your limbs pressing against yourself
The way animals press into each other
(frequently, silently)

Every hair, finger pads we could print from,
your last meal.

Your lips,
a puppy mouth, opening, saying,
'you never asked me
but this was something that happened
this is me telling you'.

Boneless,
they would roll you up like a carpet.

MdF VI

I find many bodies, babies.

Dusty sings:

You don't

You don't

You don't

Just -

These mouth-cuts,
scratches in the huge red earth.

(Believe me! Believe me!)

All lariats pulled through to nothing.