

**"Vocative" by Amit Majmudar**

English is my native  
anguish. I was born here,  
read here, teased and torn here.  
Vocative, ablative,

locative, alive:  
English was a dislocation  
navigating oceans.  
Wherever it arrived,

it broke and brokered words,  
its little bits of Britain  
pilfered, bartered, written,  
looted, hoarded, heard.

Papa swapped a world  
for shiny colored beads,  
for dandelion seeds.  
We are subject verbs.

The root word of my name  
hooks a foreign land,  
long-since-shifted sand  
books cannot reclaim.

Graft of tongue, gift of dust,  
mother and stranger, sing  
the kedgerie, the everything  
at once you've made of us.