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Poems

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Abstract

GUILLAUME'S LOOM, HASTINGS, 1080, HER FATHER IN THE PATIENTS' GARDEN,
NEWCASTLE BOROUGH LUNATIC ASYLUM, 1919

Gillian Allnutt

GUILLAUME'S LOOM, HASTINGS, 1080

I made a loom for Mathilda, my English daughter.
Mathilde! I called. I wanted to show her
 The strong clay rings I'd made to hold the thread
 As hard and near as I held her. I wasn't proud
 Of the rest – a rough affair of stick and thole
 Cut from the worst English wood, I think hazel,
 And English wool.

HER FATHER IN THE PATIENTS' GARDEN, NEWCASTLE BOROUGH LUNATIC ASYLUM, 1919

I am not lost. I harbour my loneliness here
 By the larkspur. Here, where the hand of my daughter,
 Margaret's hand in hard love, took my elbow –
 The smell of the ward's in my hair.
 Behind me now, the black clocktower, the wall –
O God, our ... God, reported missing and presumed, etcetera,
 When they built that wall.
 I'll take my soul and sixpence when I go.
 I'll go to Muriel, though she is laid
 Aside. *My mother, Dad, my mother's ...* Margaret said.
 The stones of the path in the patients' garden –
 Narrow then wide, narrow then wide.

Note: The hospital, taken over by the Ministry of War during World War I, is now known as St Nicholas' Hospital.