

### **The Lions of Leeds Town Hall**

Drawn, my teacher told us, from life  
at London Zoo, so life-like  
you could catch one from the corner  
of your eye curling an oversize paw  
like a cat in a square of sunlight  
on the kitchen floor or flicking the dirt  
of a hundred and forty years from its mane –

blackbright lions lazing in the haze  
of fading might. Here they come  
up Park Row, claws clacking on the flags,  
leaping parked cars, nosing over litter bins.  
Sure enough the city after dark  
is an outdoor enclosure for owls and sheep,  
gargoyles and eagles and a family of Roe deer  
grazing placid in Mandela Gardens.

And as for the museum – the security guards  
can hardly hear themselves think for the squawk  
and scream of the treetops in the Mechanics' Institute,  
yawning hippos and an extinction of dodos  
hopping down the stairs toward Millennium Square.  
And who dare check that Nesyamun,  
three thousand years dead, hasn't shifted  
his shrunken bones, sat up  
and started tapping against the glass?

*Ian Harker*

**A Rose By Any Other Name...**

Li:dz Li:dz Li:dz

The phonetic emphatic  
Beloved of the Gelderd end  
Of the city that is my home  
Wherever I may live

Loidis, nestled in the  
Forest of Elmet, cradle of  
An ancient nation spoken  
Of by Bede and yes, perhaps  
Once a home to Lions

It became Ledes  
Before it became Leeds  
A small crossing point, to wade  
From pre-industry to the modern day  
A city before it was united.

*Nick Allen*

**Lesson**

The plural of child's a hard one,  
and the difference between hunger  
and anger. And between us and we, they and them.

We eat with our hands.  
I explain the difference  
between want and need.  
He teaches me anta, anti,  
kayfa haluka?  
Bikhayr. Shukran.

Long vowels take practice  
Leeds Leeds Leeds Leeds  
and the drum and snare  
of Harehills. Harehills.  
Some words he has off pat,  
like Home Office, Home Office.

*Ian Harker*

## Incomers

Shukran, I learned one time in Agadir in the surf, strolling  
On the great scimitar beach, looking out across the rolling  
Atlantic, endless and heaving, nipping at my toes like a kitten.

So now I could ask for my key and thank the receptionist; mia hamsa,  
My room number. The rest was nods, smiles and the universal pointing finger  
Except the argument with the taxi driver trying to rip us off on the way

Back from the market, that happened in a French that was rusty and broken.  
I learned to love the sugared mint tea, the pastries of sweet chicken  
Clouded with icing sugar and the muezzin's gentle alarm call each morning.

Is it the ginnel that makes us, it's not the pass or the way; perhaps the snicket,  
Or the debate on if the ball is best bowled around or over the wicket.  
How would we teach Yorkshire to the incomer? Would we wax lyrical

On the joy of beef gravy on your chips rather than mushy peas  
Explain that fruit cake is not right without a slice of Wensleydale cheese,  
Or perhaps it is just best to warn them that everyone will call you love.

4b)

On the difference between "need" and "want": written for my lover

Oxygen, food, water, shelter  
Sleep and you; you bring  
Fire. Then there's everything else

*Nick Allen*

### **The Shopping Capital of the North Versus the Urban Beach**

It started in Millennium Square,  
barely an archipelago, a few deck chairs,  
a Hawaiian theme.

But the sand is spreading, slapping through revolving doors, sieving through air vents.

By Thursday the Headrow is closed to traffic,  
buzzards are circling the Civic Hall,  
from Beeston Hill the city is a mirage folding  
and refolding in the white heat.  
Sand, no respecter of road blocks,  
is filling in the gaps. There's no stopping it -  
soon the statues will be up to their necks  
in lizard prints, the shopping capital of the North  
just another city the sand reclaimed.

*Ian Harker*

## The Battle for LS1

First they put up roadblocks manned by armed police  
Then they filled the skies with choppers bristling with indignant, spitting  
machine guns. Next they built a wall crowned  
With shining, thirsty razor wire, that ran the length of the ring road.  
At night searchlights swept the wall casting brief, bleak  
Daylight into the cowering corners while steadily gazing watchtowers  
Looked down on people trying to avoid catching their eye,  
And they did all this to keep us in The Loop. They called us terrorists,

They said we were guerillas fighting an illegal war  
We fought for each building; we fought from room to room. Rioting flowed  
Along the Calls and the length of Boar Lane,  
We emptied the swollen vaults on Park Row and plundered  
The Cathedral's depthless gilt.  
Later they dammed the river Aire to flush us from the sanctuary  
We had found in the dark arches.  
But before too long the city centre was surrendered to the mob,

To the mass; the lawless and the desperate  
As they called us. They lied in their presses that we were intent  
Only on burning and looting, when the truth  
Was that people who could take no more were taking all they could.  
We filled our food banks and fed the needy.  
The riots were the fruit grown from the stones at the heart of austerity,  
Nurtured in multi-national boardrooms,  
Banking houses, in gentlemen's clubs and legitimized in Parliaments

That had long since given up the pretence  
Of acting for the people and now simply served the one per cent.  
They criminalized the immigrant, the disabled  
The young and the unemployed. Eventually Armley overflowed swelling  
The ranks of the hungry and the dispossessed,  
Those for whom even hope was a bitter luxury. The rulers, the rich  
And unashamed took what refuge they could  
In penthouses, hiding behind extravagantly muscled mercenaries

Who would protect them for as long as the price was right.  
They tried to starve us in a siege born of spite. While buzzards circled  
Civic Hall we made our base in the Corn Exchange,  
Renamed for Ideas; stolen food was passed around, an equal share to all.  
We gathered our strength and turned to face them,  
We chased them off our streets, we ran them from their bolt-holes.  
The sentry on Bridgewater Belvedere could only watch

As the last helicopter took flight, evacuating the roof of Harvey Nicks...

*Nick Allen*

**Thomas Piketty Picks His Way  
Through the Shattered Shopfronts**

He's at a conference in Leeds  
when the fighting starts.  
As soon as he hears he skips the plenary  
and heads for the Headrow, the Headrow aglow  
with burning riot vans.

Down Briggate the plate glass tinkles  
under his feet like small change,  
like worthless currency. In the distance  
the rattle of small arms fire,  
the tap-tap, tap-tap of Chinooks.

The mannequins eye him as he goes,  
arms and legs at all angles,  
their high cheek bones,  
their catwalk scowls all there is  
to suggest their surprise that here  
among the teargas and riot gear,  
here outside the chapel of Our Lady  
of Teargas is Tomas Piketty,  
Piketty who saw through it all,  
Piketty who followed the money,  
Piketty who saw it all coming.

In Harvey Nick's they are lighting candles  
at the altar of Our Lady, Our Lady of Teargas,  
they are lighting candles for her children  
on the streets of Athens and London,  
New Orleans and Ferguson, Missouri.  
Be with us now in Trafalgar and Tiananmen,  
on the Champs Élysées and in Times Square,  
be with us as we face the tanks and the truncheons,  
the teargas and sirens, your blue  
the blue of flashing lights,  
the blue of the baton charge.

Piketty steps through the shattered shopfront  
into the remains of the foodhall.  
The makeshift congregation turns  
at the crunch of the glass under his heels.  
The celebrant smiles. You are just in time



she says to read us the first lesson.

*Ian Harker*

## Surface & Detail

I remember the teenage goths and the street corner punks slouching in HMV,  
All sugar-spiked hair and calf tight jeans, with their pantomime  
Horror and mascara shock and band names tippex-ed on leather.  
And I remember the city smothered in a century's exhaust fumes, the fug  
From factories churning out their goods and the coal-fired home hearths  
Of countless snaking terraces and Quarry Hill, the failed citadel of modernism.

Hiding in plain sight, DJ and charity worker, chat show host, meals  
At Chequers, friend to royals and lords. He had the keys to all the wards.  
Yorkshire's finest, beating David Oluwale then fishing his body from the Aire.  
A Nigerian national, the official log shows that police preferred the term "wog".  
Or the truck driver who dragged Victorian horror back onto the streets holding  
Up a mirror to society's mores, valuing the lives of "innocent women" over "whores".  
Or the trusted doctor concealing decades of murders, the university educated  
Pillar of the community; you won't find his name on the list of alumni.

City centre traffic is restricted and we all drive unleaded these days,  
There's no industry to speak of, the Portland stone glistens in a certain light,  
The lions are scrubbed clean and the carved facades can be plainly seen.  
Now Quarry Hill plays host to the dramas of the DSS and the playhouse, while  
Scrubbed of their pancake masks, the goths and the punks, were just other kids.  
And so time washes, everyday a different river, everyday a different sky.

*Nick Allen*