

Graffiti ferns lilac
Those pink pointy flowers
I don't know the name of
Style magazines
Cans of San Pellegrino
People either texting or talking on phones
I'm on the train to Leeds ...
A sea of brown bricked houses to the left
A girl with a heart-shaped bag on the platform
A boy with the word Bazinga on his t-shirt
Nettles and leaves
blowing in the wind the train creates
I'm on the way to Leeds
to dance....
perfectly cared for allotments to the left
high rise flats....
let the dance begin...

Julie Rose Clark

(The Kirkgate Series)

Wind sweeps the street, smacks against your cheeks.
A sound that howls moves to a broken beat.
It's bound to collide, not greet.
The echo that follows hides inside the hollows
of the alleyways and walkways
that haunt Kirkgate.
Empty tins.
Discarded carrier bags.
A vortex of Saturday's remnants: smashed glass and takeaway wrappers. Salty tears
and words that sear then vanish.
Buildings threaded together like blackened pearls on a string.
Forever weathered. Round here, you see, there's no win.

Inconvenient stores that sell jarred gherkins but no milk.
Tin after tin of condensed soup, but no bread to mop up the guilt.
Stand still long enough and you'll catch men that jitter
see women who know their dreams were fritted long ago.
Listen to them ask for suspicious weights of chicken thighs,
then realise when they turn and smile at you that they've got no teeth.

Rebecca Levick

Meeting Jack

Jack sits on the seat opposite me
says hes just graduated
Jack is full of life
he has a tooth missing
he has long hair a bit like mine
Jack wants to sit with me
instead of his mates
Jack plays guitar and sings
Jack used to be a gardener
Jack knows how to smile
Jacks got a job lined up on a cruise ship
He's due to sail from Miami
Jack does yoga once a week
Jack warmed my heart up
Thank you Jack.

Julie Rose Clark

The marzipan-eyed girl, no more than three, sings a song, waits patiently for freeze-dried meals to come down from above.
It's the hand that feeds her.
It's the food of astronauts,
That's what they tell her.
My stomach stirs.
Who deserves more pity?
The young and the elderly,
Or the men who only come to life when there's a fight.
You can't imagine this street as new.
Back in the haze of those days.
The library's subscribers paid five shillings a year
Let's not forget the first m&s opened here
And White Cloth Hall had it all.
It was lively.
Full of vibrancy.
Like grass that grasps at the morning dew.
The smell of paint sticks at the back of your nose.
Now you'd never know the paint that's peeling was once wet,
Or that it was enough to incite feeling other than regret.

Rebecca Levick

They've gone to Leeds without me
to get a bike
I wanted to go
but they said no
said it would be boring
and why would I want to go to a council estate in Leeds
in traffic

Julie Rose Clark

Around the corner, cranes whirl. Concrete crashes.
One man's voice shouts directions to the masses.
A building comes down.
A shopping centre goes up.
Next year this side of town will be chrome and gold and all things shiny.
People look tiny under a roof made of windows.

Multiple floors, hundreds of stores
There's money making potential – but where will it stop?
What's happening to this area that's sacramental to the city.

Why wait until a higher power can say it's time to pay attention, invest, get
spending. Until then it's pending.
And the rule that follows is consume more and forget the poor.

They say they're building character.
There's fancy bricks and tricks they can use to make it look like the building's always
been there.
But you can't manufacture character.
And you can't build a city on debt free money when borrowing is advertised freely.

Rebecca Levick

Does what it says on the tin.

drunks on the train from Leeds
looking for the toilet where there isn't one
a man from the Czech Republic speaks no English
a Yorkshire man tells him to *get outta the bloody way*
does what is says on the tin
meanwhile a pasty-eating man is getting angry with
messages on his mobile phone
getting up and odown
pressing buttons turning round
the toilets that way mate
he looks tough
does what is says on the tin
ladies in going-to-the-races-hats with feathers,
lots of make-up
cans of Gordon's Gin and its only 10am
does what is says on the tin
man walks along with t-shirt
saying *warning may contain alcohol*
girls attempt to run in high heels
later my bike gets stolen
no CCTV for that bike rack they say
does what is says on the tin
I meet two nurses on the train
one in training, one off sick
the state of the mental health in the NHS she says
appalling, she's never known such coldness
they lock you in a room to cry she says
I can't speak about it she says
you lose your compassion after 12 hour shifts she says
done to save money she says
does what is says on the tin.

does what is says on the tin

Julie Rose Clark

It's creating jobs.

Thank God for the new retail development.

Because expensive shirts give the unemployed a reason to work.

This city is for everyone.

To progress as one we need foundations for all.

How will it work when the gap between us is left to grow into a crater?

When the people and their streets are left to feel like a tumour on an otherwise aspiring society.

Invest in the people and the streets that need it.

Don't give them less because they are the ones who'll feel it.

Rebecca Levick