

Leeds, 1980

(mapped onto the face of Alan Bennett)

When I came to Leeds, in the autumn of nineteen eighty,
the centre was given over to a steep-sided potato field.

To its north-west and north-east respectively lay
fenced parkland, avened by files of mature trees,
an oval pond in each, and each bounded to the north
by a line of ragged copse cresting a high arched hill.

West and east of the parks, this symmetry extended—
both far quarters centred on a sports stadium complex,
full of condensed din, cupped by encircling roads.

The south—scarified by the hatchwork and gashes
of the city's twin but quite separate railway services,
laid by obdurately competing companies—was poorer,
dirtier, darker. Between these fletchings of railtrack,
the mouth of a long, east-west valley had been deepened
by crude excavation—a concretion of private quarries
for the local, once useful, if ill-valued, donkey stone.

Flanking the valley's deep cut, two vast crescents
of stark white tower blocks, streaked with the rust
of fallpipes and other ironworks, reflected glaringly
what light made it through to them. Their basements,
famously, housed steam rooms, fiercely guarded
by stout women, jealous of the dense warmth within.

The whole southside bristled with such mousey scrub
as gained purchase on its creased, coal-veined cheeks.
The raked lips of the valley sides were gulley-ridden,
mephitic in summer, fly-tipped always. Between them,
rhubarb—grey, faintly blued, never purple—flourished.
What industry had survived survived hereabouts.

The city's northernmost outskirts, on the other hand,
boasted long sweeps of rough-combed woodland,
their outer stretches clipped but otherwise unimpeded
by the soft brow of moor and fieldwork below.

Money—invariably, it seemed—moved northward
and out of town, half or all the way to Harrogate.

I found a flat in a condemned municipal block
close by the potato field. My interest in the kicked,
bruised, buboe-eyed potatoes common enough
in the gutters of the city centre's narrow ginnels
became a measure of my gathering poverty.

Andrew Lambeth

1980 (regressed)

The head – rough combed
ragged – given over
to the North steep-sided full
of condensed din

Fletchings donkey-stone
quarries scarified gashes
obdurately competing

On the unimpeded
brow concretions a half
condemned block
stark streaked rust
fall-pipes basements
dense mephitic

Raked lips mouths cupped
poorer dirtier
a potato field
rhubarb—faintly
otherwise

Linda Black

Mort gauge

Hood-

head,

Face

it—we may never meet.

I imagine your features,

taut set as though barely

enduring the precipitate

leaking of this moment,

this one now— What's

Left of What's Gone Before (all Right

and Wrong tangled to a

bind-weed-meet- honey-

suckle's self- strangling)

spilling out backwards;

and the As Yet Not Yet

spilt as fast the other way,

whip- riddled by Becoming,

hooked on Another Chance.

No wonder the body seems

rigid—it hollows itself

with the strain of being

supple, its skin kite, its

feet

air.

Andrew Lambeth

Riding

Not as it were

on air cold scolded back-to-back Whip

between states exclude

the aftermath return

to the Above what's gone

West wrong – less

Of the moor stone

cold turned to grit Grapple

discreetly *mean wood sugar well* fly over

the Soldier's Fields

Waterloo Lake

Loiner

Marry me

Linda Black

Quart

You can't fit a quart into a pint pot, or
Fret your life away, fret and fret at it.
so it's said. Can't remember by who—
Now fill your flask with the sawdust,
someone. They. Turned out you could.
the dust of what you saw, or missed.
Pour a pint of sawdust in first, then
Pour in tears, sweat, blood—plus
follow it up with a pint of water.
such other body fluids as you must—
It makes a pint of wet sawdust.
moonlight, an identity crisis, getting
Apparently. Hours of fun. For all the family.
hanged—or winged, if you prefer—
If you have one, a family-fun-loving one.
by a skein of mist. Then the bit where
Which I far from had, me. Not much family
you sidelong say this is me, this is what
entertainment there. Booze, pills, weed,
is happening to me, like you, meaning
scenes—even the occasional orgy—
not like you. For instance, I was sheltering
was our family no-fun of a weekend.
back of a country road pub, homeless,
(No, I lie—us kids were spared the sex
curled up round the parasol pole
at least. Mornings after, my little brother
of a beer garden table, clutching at
mixed and downed all the coloured liquids
a scallop of gaudy cloth, the landlord
while I had the more numerous colourless
cussing and me vagabonded, brassic,
ones—our early doors bracers. We shared
fallen so soon, before a vicar stepped in—
the crisps, peanuts, After Eights, twiglets
or up, as they say—cash from the poor
gone soft, longer butts.) Poetry's another
box, welling confusion of retinal detail—
of those quart-into-a-pint-pot tricks.
cornflakes, reredos—its unspilling.

Over

What's gone before – please
yourself for I *whose identity?*
have my say

Draw

back tramp
the sodden way the pickled
path blunder up Buslingthorpe Lane (containing
half the alphabet)

*behind the chimney in the bottom right hand corner
the haulage yard*

Intent

on mismatch *rhubarb rhubarb rhubarb* patch

Hop

on the 3 Circular take the road
back into town meet me half-way

down Gledhow Valley Road
gled whak & how

Linda Black

And out

Before I was excommunicated
(weddings and funerals excepted,
I assumed), I loved the psalms,
the bifold di visions of their lines
merging into the contours of the valley
of the shadow of... darkside one side,
godly sunned the other, a child trudging
the riverbanks between, living on insects,
certain scaly-swaddled crustacea,
what could be picked or picked up,
much like the Meanwood Valley,
just up from the Primrose, Buslingthorpe,
down where the farm faces the wooded Ridge,
where buried body parts were discovered,
possibly a prostitute's, shreds
of crime scene tape snagged
in the under growth even now,
and then, two years later, both
my stolen sketch books were found
in one of the locked allotment sheds close by,
for which I was summoned
to the ring road police station
and made to account—it being
a murder enquiry, of the highest
seriousness— for the cryptic penciled codes
and esoteric devices on every page.
I'm a typographer, I said. Lettering. They're
just letters, workings out. It's a bit like poetry.
You'd better sign here and get out then.

This is me

In a conker a copse a corpuscle
contravened
or leaning

Out the window of 3 Ingledeu Crescent, Leeds 8
whistling to Lesley Rollinson

w00-w00 / w00-w00 / w000 w000

long after bedtime

Nazis
under the bed (God saw
the Jew in me)

Survivor – incubator / placater / negator

try not opening try

Trespass

cold-home-cuts-razed-bed-tied-hall

illusion collusion intrusion
disambiguation

There is more

but
I
can't
tell

Linda Black

Cross nowy

N O W E D W I T H	N E T T E D B Y
T H E N O T - N O W	T H E N E P L U S
E N T W I N I N G S	U L T R A O F T O O
O F U N K N O W N	M A N Y K N O W N
K N O W N S	K N O W N S
	W E
	A R E
S W I T C H -	S E E T H E D
B A C K E D O N	B Y A S E A O F
S W A N N I N G S	T H E S E C R E T S
O F U N K N O W N	O F K N O W N
U N K N O W N S	U N K N O W N S

Andrew Lambeth

Leeds *away away*

I has formed its tune twine true design

Paths say splay specify

Allude collude go

Between

In parallel

I & I

You & You

We & We

Us–Use–Used–Using

To avail

Foul or Fairweather

Linda Black