

**1**

**History**

When my footsteps are found under twenty layers of tarmac  
when yours are found travelling towards them  
and at the place where we meet there's only  
the imprint of my toes someone will surmise  
correctly that you were tall and that we kissed.  
Perhaps some archaeologist will imagine  
a future we never had because our love  
was like the black skin on the Town Hall  
that I thought was part of its very fabric  
but turned out to be only decades of smoke.

*Tracey Martin*

**2**

**Town Hall Steps**

Current thinking tells us that all time  
is happening all the time  
and though I can't really get my head around  
this idea, it does occur to me as I eat my sandwiches  
sitting on the Town Hall steps, busying a flake of old confetti  
with my shoe, that if this current thinking is indeed true,  
it means that while a couple kissed on these steps yesterday  
a man, right beneath their feet, added up the minutes  
he would remain free. And it means that their marriage could have already  
been as long as his life was short, and that I was disappointed  
by my sandwich before the first bite, and that this bit of confetti has always  
been stuck to my shoe; evidence that thoughts move in circles:  
reminds me days later of that man in his cell, that couple  
out the door, and my place on the fringes of it all.

*Jo Brandon*

**3**

**Market Clock**

Strange what the brain does and does not retain.  
While I was ogling fruit set in boxes  
like lozenges in a Moorish mosaic,  
and crowds of flowers transcending  
their humble buckets, rolls of cloth  
piled up in jumbles of colour,  
haberdashery, lingerie, hosiery,  
while I searched the cluttered delicatessens  
for exotic adventure, dreams of escape,  
you were ticking away unnoticed,  
measuring time. Each tick, each tock  
a unique second, captured, then lost,  
unreachable yet unchanged.

*Tracey Martin*

**4**

**Second Date**

I buy a full-skirted tutu, layered up like a black meringue,  
three tabs of buttons from the odds drawer  
and a length of ribbon - though I can't tell you just how long.

You tell me you have a market-bag of delights too.  
We sit on the steps of the civic hall,  
laying out deli-tubs of taramasalata, tzatziki, hummus,  
faintly warm bread and olives.

You pronounce their names with a flair of authenticity  
only slightly undermined by my having no measure of it.  
I've never heard of most of these things;  
a mallowy pink dip deceptive in its salty tang,  
olives concealing stones.

Our greedy consumption, unaware of passers-by,  
we played the buttons on a napkin-board of tic-tac-toe,  
naively sketching out shared futures in the considerate  
domesticity of packing up empty containers  
and scrunched paper bags - neither noticing  
our lunch hour had already passed.

*Jo Brandon*

5

**Memoria, Armley Mills**

A moment etched  
in light and porcelain.  
A somersault into death  
becomes the curve  
of a rusted boiler  
rescued from the dark.

A regret cast in clay  
is painted with china.  
Hung above water  
its reflection  
is more solid  
than the real thing.

A sea of wool  
transformed to wire  
and white tiles  
curved like waves.  
The lights fill  
the space with shadows.

*Tracey Martin*

6

**Bentley & Tempest Ltd.**

Bodies hot and fibrous between hempen looms,  
light falls in knotted cordage over spindleshanked  
half-dayers scrabbling unchancy under and around  
the snarl of work.

Skein of a tune is cat's cradled between long-shifters,  
used to isolating thought from hand, until snary interruptions  
gnarl half-heard song into machine-thrum.

The afternoon keeps its colour while one or two try to toit  
what they've mundled; hours are knit into each yard and fold  
along with scuff-dust and long hairs that grey and fall.

*Jo Brandon*

7

**Mill Days**

His hands were always red raw,  
her skirt slick with lanolin, her eyes  
ached from rubbing out the fibres.  
He was half deaf from the din.

Nowhere to wash till they got home  
and then only the kitchen sink,  
tin bath in front of the fire  
once a week. They coughed relentlessly.

He showed me his missing finger.  
Careless, he said, only himself  
to blame. Missed the respect though,  
Proper skilled he was, that's  
what made me fall for him, she said.  
A sigh. Yes, them were the days.

*Tracey Martin*

8

**Bill's thumb.**

His thumb was gone.  
Not a clean line like that lame trick  
Dad does to make his thumb disappear  
and reappear, elaborating on the 'gotcha nose'  
of younger years.

Bill's thumb was stumped, uneven,  
a little red, pink and purple  
but I probably wouldn't have noticed  
if he hadn't brought it to our attention.

'Do you know how I lost my thumb?'  
became the start to our visit each week.  
Telling a different story each time.  
The second week I had started to contradict him  
but Mum shushed me right up.

We had rats gnawing it off in a dank basement,  
a plane crash, a dual, the kitchen blender

(there was a definite Health and Safety message in that one),  
standing too close to a Windmill, a helicopter,  
a county round of 'Tug o' War', shaving,  
chopping vegetables and variations unnumbered.

I asked Mum whether she knew  
how he really lost his thumb,  
yes, she said and left it there.

*Jo Brandon*