

### **'Eurycleia entertains a stranger in Armley'**

There's always stew on the menu,  
cobbled together from donated veg,  
and – today – plenty of bread.  
Bank holidays fuck with your benefits,  
so the visitor's hungry, will consume  
whatever's put in front of him.  
Voracious for a listener to hear the tale  
oft rehearsed for deaf ears, he eats and talks.

A steel worker, made redundant,  
but not before he'd caught the wound  
that scored his face from temple to chin.  
The old scar's as fine as the flattened seam  
on a sunflower seed. It moves,  
as he chews, and the dip  
of his stubbly cheek pulses.  
*Then cirrhosis, then cancer, then ...*

I replenish his bowl, pour sugar  
into a mug of tea. Belly warmed,  
he's calmer; sits cupping thin hands  
round the chipped cup. His cuffs  
are glossed with grime; there are spaces  
where buttons used to hold things together.  
The inches of his healed injury measure  
rare gifts of the trust he shares.

Docketed, his meal adds to the stats,  
but I keep no record of dirty dishes;  
just mix hot and cold water in a bowl,  
and, since I cannot wash the feet  
of the honoured guest, and rejoice  
in secret at the homecoming,  
I slide his smeared plates  
below the bubbles in the sink.

*Hannah Stone*

## **Armley Clock School**

Now it's a business centre, cheaper than downtown Leeds,  
where private healthcare clients can get fast-track diagnoses  
and young guns parking underneath the clock tower's symmetry  
don't see asylums, workhouses or transit termini  
but 'an impressive character building, redeveloped to provide  
modern office suites within gated landscaped grounds'.

Only a few still left remember their playground's past: the clouds  
of pale blue candy-floss that floated across from Roberts' works  
like feathers over the Aviary's estate, to whiten the coke heap  
and soot-black brick, tinsel the window cords and fall  
like the warm dry snow of dreams, into the paradise kids make  
of whatever they find. Game after game they played out  
the best years of their lives, under the ticking clock.

*Julia Deakin*

## **‘Cliff Tannery, ‘repurposed’**

Edward Kitchen’s Cliff Tannery  
needed no ‘inventory;’ the gaffer knew,  
at a glance, if things were in place.  
Skins, scrapers, parts for the pumps  
that leached the water from Meanwood Beck,  
and the labourers, always rows of men  
sweaty, stinking; stained hands reeking  
from pisspots and greasy hides,  
and the beck keeping no tally  
of the toxins that dulled its brightness.

Pevsner might have demeaned himself  
to comment on ‘rusticated sandstone,  
with ashlar dressings;’ enumerated  
two-storey pilasters and twenty four bays.  
Its transformation was Heritage Lottery funded,  
captured on Historic England’s website.  
Today’s tenants click on Sugarwell Court,  
choosing accommodation handy for uni  
(and a choice of supermarkets, prompt the mums  
peering over shoulders at a gallery of images.)

What do they want with dustpan and brush,  
grillpan and ironing board, toilet roll holders?  
Stow the pasta and teabags, test the bed,  
throw open the window to let out the heat  
and catch, between the pinging of incoming texts,  
the gurgle of the beck, which meanders  
past a dam of abandoned trolleys,  
plastic bags snagged in the rushes, and a long blue rope  
swinging aimlessly beside blackened nettles  
and the season’s first yellowed leaves.

*Hannah Stone*

## **Invisible**

*Ladies and gentlemen, we are now approaching Leeds.*

Look out to see the world-famous statue  
gliding into view. Eleven storeys high from the door  
in his heel, you can climb the staircase inside  
to the windows in his ears, should you so wish.

Built in nineteen-eighty-nine, this much-loved icon  
stands for everyone who comes to work or study here  
then stays and gives their all. As you know  
the Brick Man – star of Instagram and Snapchat –  
is the North's Big Ben, and made the sculptor's name.

Asked what he'd have done if Leeds had said no,  
Gormley said some kind of metal angel.  
Lucky Leeds acquired the tribute it deserved –  
to long-termism: vision, art, and nerve.

*Julia Deakin*

## **'Gulliver visits the Yorkshire Sculpture Park'**

Ten gargantuan spectators  
are seated in the dress circle  
for the best view of the lake below them.  
They have no heads;  
layered swathes of cedars  
float between their absent eyes  
and the muddy slope.

The stage is set near the Lower Park  
but the crew's gone home, leaving  
a hybrid Brobdingnag, whose human hands  
direct the line of vision offstage  
into coniferous wings. Her hare head  
discloses fear, in backward streaming ears.

She has fallen on strange times,  
as cogs and locks and kitchen implements  
have ossified her womanly limbs.  
A mulch of autumn leaves  
softens the ground beneath her knees.

Huge, also, the hedge of evergreens  
in the dingy orangery,  
where nothing is in reach except  
one raspberry-ripple camellia bloom.

The eternity fountain's liquid light  
plays on for no audience;  
its trickle dies beneath the motor's noise.

These other worlds unwelcome  
their small visitors, proclaiming

*This door should remain closed at all times.*

*Hannah Stone*

## **Reclining woman: Elbow, 1981**

Twenty-nine years I sprawled outside the gallery  
after Moore chose me – me! – as his tour de force.

Neither naked nor draped in the stuff Leeds made  
and sells, my Jane Austen eyes miss nothing.

I watched a generation sidle, cycle, wait  
for the 81, prod sandwiches, play phone games, flirt.

I watched the clouds, the fog, the Town Hall clock  
tick round. I watched the night-shift cleaners come

and go. Whatever the old man meant, I know  
I sit for the rest they earned, their elbow grease,

the hurriers' and housemaids' knees, the centuries  
of broken backs that made Leeds great.

A crane came once: six hard-hats swung me up  
over The Headrow to Amsterdam for a stint

on the Rijksmuseum lawn, where I reclined  
with the best. Gleaming, graffitied, blown on,

snowed on, shat on, spat on. See sex in me  
if you want, young man, but don't underestimate

these wall-high hips, these pit-prop biceps.  
Stick your head here, sunshine, at your own risk.

This long-fingered hand can weave, can write,  
can strum, can calibrate – and this left fist can fight.

Spreading my bulk as if Leeds were an Eden,  
I claim my place in the city's pantheon.

*Julia Deakin*

## **'Two piece reclining figure 1 (1959)'**

*The reference is to Jane Goodall's definition of man as a 'tool-making creature.'*

Since you ask, yes, there were  
formative experiences in my youth,  
though which came first I can't recall.  
I remember visiting Adel Rock,  
where I stood stunned into immobility  
by the way it erupted from the woodland floor,  
with planes and angles, textured,  
tinted by moss and lichen,  
and knew that other lads would straight have clambered,  
conquered its heights, struck macho poses,  
scratched obscenities, while I saw only  
the contours of the human condition.  
And my hands remember finding the underlying form  
of flesh and skin, bone and ligament  
in my mother's rheumatic back  
as I rubbed in pungent liniment.

And so I learned my trade; eye informed hand.  
I picked up pencils, charcoal,  
hammers, chisels; using tools, then making new ones  
from fire and air and muscle power,  
bending and forming elements  
forged from earth's fiery core.

A soundbite for your interview?  
Sculptors, in synergy with nature,  
do not just impose their will,  
but let their labours liberate  
the voice of bronze, the stone's own breath,  
and that's how I became a man.

*Hannah Stone*

## **Red Kite over Harehills Lane**

*'When the kite builds, look to lesser linen.'*  
The Winter's Tale

Ten seconds at the lights present a sight  
unseen in Leeds since Shakespeare's day,  
when these 'har' hills were bare and grey,  
Oakwood just an oak wood. Stranger,  
welcome back from your diaspora.

As gulls tow fishing ports inland, this hawk  
brings open vistas, promontories, visions  
of a world elsewhere. Above the vying signs –  
Electrotown, Food from Lithuania,  
Your Loan Shop, Lota Properties – she soars  
off kilter like a toy kite in the diesel fret,  
pinpointing a washing line, a risky rat,  
two skips behind the Polski Sklep.

From this fraught junction of the disparate,  
pluck hope: that the improbable is possible.  
Tonight she'll tuck a Hello Kitty glove  
into the twigs to signal 'nest on song'.  
Tides turn. Hearts change. It need not take so long.

*Julia Deakin*