

Arrival

I gave this unknown city all my hopes,
stood new wing wet, with all that I was
on the cusp, my future stretching out.

The lustre of learning drew me to Leeds,
and a yearning for freedom, so I swapped
my leafy, London suburb for the unknown north.

Once there, I could loosen, shake off my shadow,
constant companion, twinned at birth,
identical, except the contents of our heads.

At first I felt her absence like a missing limb,
then formed new neural pathways to cope with
the gap.

Parkinson tower shone as I leaned into learning,
earthbound but longing to fly, feel the lift.
I lapped up lectures, fed greedily on books.

It made me laugh to overhear on my morning bus
a mother scolding her noisy child with, 'if you're not
careful, you'll grow up to be one of those students!'.
'

Leeds skies were often overcast, their grey's lidding
my world. It rained more too, but water washed,
rinsing dun colour, loosening and freeing thoughts.

I learned to like black pudding in Leeds,
smile when called 'petal' or 'flower',
Discovered Truffaut, Pasolini and first tasted whisky.

Long vowels shortened, or changed shape in t' north,
I loved their different sounds, translating them
alongside Beowulf's Anglo Saxon in my head.

Sue Wrinch

Say Leeds!

Leeds poetry's more than the big names,
Hill, Harrison, Armitage, Duhig,
though I have lapped them up for more
than thirty years. I'd say for me

it's family: my wife and children born
and raised here, who are its history,
our daily lives, our hopes and fears,
our pride in how the city's helped us be.

Dad jobs for me include the photographs
at birthdays, Christmases, on holiday.
In Cheddar, I'll line them up with a *Say cheese!*

Sometimes (he came from my home town), *Say Cleese!*
Most of all our family, home or away
from Yorkshire, will smile to hear *Say Leeds!*

Richard Brown

Wool

All day long it seemed to rain,
there was no refuge in the sad,
green grimace of the fields,
over-flossed with sheep, like desolate
cocoon with resolute, sturdy feet.

They were wearing lives and fortunes,
as Leeds was woven out of wool,
in medieval times, from the first
grey waking of the day when dawn,
stretched out across a skein of sky.

Crust and crumb came from lamb and ewe,
wealth growing freely upon their backs.
Grey wool weaving our town, growing first
from village, then into a sprawling,
city garment huge enough to fit a giant.

Markets metamorphosed into factories.
Land, once green, grew hard as industrial
monsters stamped and stomped across it.
their beast eyes predicting future slums,
with darkness, smoke and gold.

Sue Wrinch

Clothworkers

As if the architects that fashioned it
were clothworkers, Leeds town's
laid down like woven woollen cloth
to warm the hill above the Aire.

The warp threads or stamina
of Briggate and Lands Lane
are wefted with Whitelocks,
Turk's Head, Commercial Street,

Packhorse Yard, Albion Place,
the Angel and the Ship, Queen's
and Thornton's arcade (with clock)
and Swan Street, weaving the streets

and the arcades between the lanes.
Such winsome loiner names
for the little hops between the shops
that tie the stamens to the rose.

Richard Brown

Labyrinth

My real self-portrait began here,
a framework, an outline already
drawn, gained light, some depths,
and shading, a kind of chiaroscuro.

Later, I wished for wings from
Daedalus to fly away,
as I was lost for a time in a labyrinth,
a maze of my own making.

I wanted to search beyond my small
horizon, find a newer, larger world,
follow the orbit of the sun until the rose
gold light of dawn hallowed a new day.

Travelling north I found love. Now south
again, although not Ithaca, my journey
has come full circle and I see that I have
followed a thread, first found in Leeds

Sue Wrinch

All Roads

All roads lead somewhere. In a way,
they all lead to each other,
in a labyrinth of spaghetti junctions.

Once I met Anthony Burgess in Monaco
thinking all roads led to Rome.
He told me *all roads lead to Leeds*.

The golden Daedalus in the Minoan Room,
grasping the necks of swans, makes me think
that his so-called friend Buck who mocks

James Joyce's Stephen for having
a Greek name, only knows half the story.
He is a kind of Cretan. In his diary

he dreams of the *white arms of roads*
as if he could make magic wings
from words and fly over the sea

from his home island, better than
Icarus had done, thinking from there
all roads might lead to Rhodes.

Richard Brown

Meanwood Beck

Standing on a stone footbridge
over Meanwood Beck, she tried
to dream up her future, but thoughts
floated, unfolding before her like
backwards origami, until they lay quite
flat.

She had made up her life's story so far,
but further words seemed impossible.
Trying to summon up resolve, her body sharp,
ready to execute a perfect, kingfisher dive,
she wavered as the waters still seemed too
shallow.

Then a sudden breeze kissed the river's
face, wrinkling it with pleasure.
Although, aware of a stony bed beneath,
she decided on a rugged course, took aim,
pushed off to haul and crawl herself into the
future.

Sue Wrinch

Meanwood Backs

Walking these elegant trollied
aisles reminds me of a poem
I wrote when I first came to Leeds,
before the Meanwood Co-op
became a Waitrose, before the
papers listed it among
the finest places you could live
in England. Thirty years ago
I was inspired by the red
brick terraces slanted
across the hillside, by the
animal reek of the fellmongers,
by flagstone pavements, grand
stone mansions, by a jog
to Adel, Eccup, Harewood House,
in all the weathers of the North,
by the smell of the fish shop
on a cold Friday evening
with the children after school,
by the gut-hollowing self-sacrifice
of local legend Captain Oates
in the Antarctic that gave new meaning
to the old word mean.

New Meanwood
has bistro life and baby buggies,
beckside brick like the canals in Bruges
where the beers come from at
Alfred's, East of Arcadia,
an inner-city space for goldfinch,
black cap, fox and deer that wander
down the valley from the reservoirs,
kingcups, archangel, cleavers,
Welsh poppies, cranesbill, green alkanet,
eyed by a red kite, its distance
framing the environment.

I wonder should I let them
know the secrets of it in the South
or let on that the strange magic
of its realism still works and
still inspires feats of industry?

Richard Brown