

Back on the estate

I'm back to visit this slice of city
I've been calling
mine. Becoming a developer
of favourite crevices
in utopia. I study its brickage
with the tactile curiosity
of a labourer, through the guilty filter
of new knowledge. Realising I'm most at peace here
post-dusk – when I'm not making it
look untidy, when the green ponds hint
at no dye silting, painted a universal
black gloss by sky. Aspiration appears to be constructed
on asbestos poisoning. Skintness. Gnarled decades drilling decoration
into the skin of concrete. Hidden belongings, thrown into the setting
foundations. A hat. A protest. A tumour. A prayer. An ancestral feeling
of opposition
in the discrepant seams of pillars, tallying
the strikes, the fresh hands brought in to keep building
callouses. Like the perpetual handymen, I've got reason
to be here, but purpose can't seem to buy a front-row seat
to belonging. I sit where the landlords
don't, where the tenants stay busied
or fenced off. Where the flats have been outed
as townhouses in disguise, bizarre inversions
of the proletariat mood, pulling down sleeves over shiny
garages. Frosted glass; champagne brutalism; class
condensation. Walls and towers and implied
outsiders. Gates politely forbidding
the best-kempt bridges, the most intentionally-placed
bench. I'd love to stay but, as always, my train
to somewhere grimier. Destined to keep returning to my housing
association, its disregard for Roman arches. To face away
from affluence, toward my poor water
pressure.