

I don't come here anymore

Surveying row upon row of telegraph poles  
through a rain-filled mist in cold December.

This used to be a field.

(We played 5-a-side football and Block 123.)

Over there, that was waste ground.

(We climbed trees, and skated when the ponds froze over...)

And I see each generation merge into the next,

my father surveying sadly his now-housing-estate childhood haunts,

blurring into myself in the Harrogate mist...

In the frozen Sunday afternoon sun we walk to Knaresborough.

(I used to drive back alone along this road in the early hours  
after taking you home.

You were here a few days ago, but you're gone again now.

I'm sorry I missed you...

I used to go to school there.

I came back once or twice years later and gazed in wonder.

(He lived down that way somewhere;

I'm not sure where, it was always dark...)

Down by the river.

The station with its viaduct and crossing.

(Tears-brimming goodbyes kissed through a train window.

I wonder where you are now...)

I hide from ex-classmates in the market,

not wanting to talk, to reminisce.

I have my reasons.

I grew up in this town...

I idled away years in that bar.

Always waiting to move onto something better, biding my time.

I moved and I don't come here anymore.

I first had sex in this room.

On the floor, around about there.

It was a Friday.

I grew up that year.

(Each corner hides a dozen memories, waiting to pounce.)

Standing in a record shop in Leeds, he says hello.

I didn't expect to see him.

But he doesn't scare me now; I'm strong with you by my side.

But then I always was strong with someone by my side...

Leeds station - I was here not so long ago.

With its shops and its spacy cold.

It was evening then.

This city - I never could find anything here.

I can't explain it to myself even.

Cold rain dribbles down my neck,

and we huddle under a black umbrella,

from one windswept emptiness streetlamp to the next.

Coloured lights false-shape the trees shimmering in the wind.

I don't come here anymore.

I'm not used to this cold anymore.

## CHRISTMAS