

STEPS INSIDE INMATES ANONYMOUS





STEPS INSIDE

This publication is the result of Litfest at Lancaster Castle July 2008 which involved a week of creative writing followed by a week of photography workshops.

Participants became co-creators of verse and image, working alongside poet Shamshad Khan and photographer Glynis Shaw. 'Steps Inside' reflects the process and the journey, revealing past histories and future hopes.

Like Haiku we have tried to convey a lot in a little. A selection from all who participated in Litfest is included together with work by Shamshad and Glynis created both as a stimulus and in response to working with the inmates.

Thanks to all Litfest Participants. We regret that in keeping with Lancaster Castle policy all contributors are anonymous.

Thanks also to Education Manager Lee Rumney and the Staff at Lancaster Castle who helped make Litfest happen.

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STEPS INSIDE was facilitated by Shamshad Khan and Glynis Shaw
Participants: Inmates Anonymous
Project Manager of Prison Litfest 2008 was Catherine Saddler

STEPS INSIDE

LITFEST AT LANCASTER CASTLE

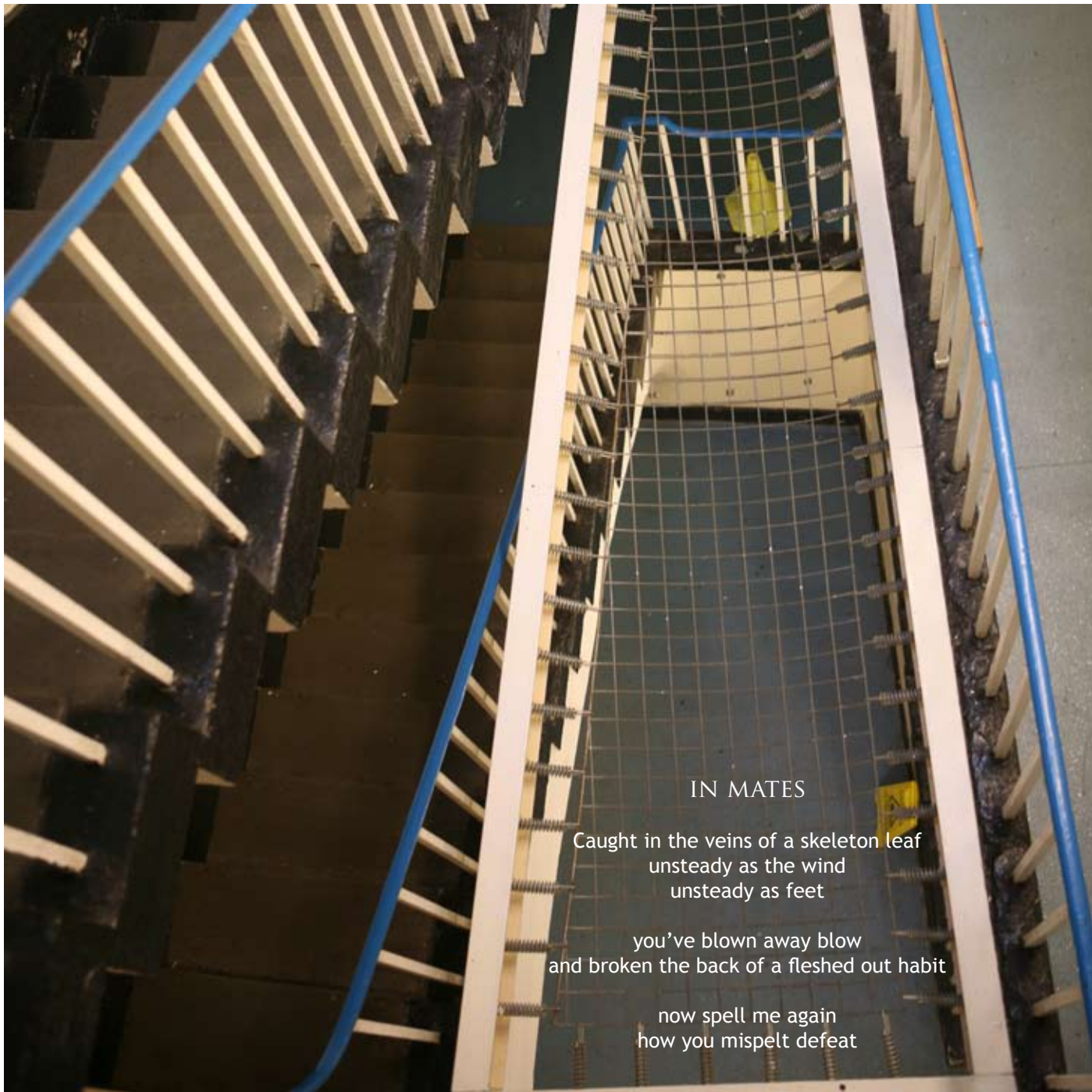


Lancaster Castle is a 12th century Norman keep with many, many steps. The twisting stairs link the Education department at the top of the building with the library in the basement. Steps are part of daily life in the Castle, up, down, in, out and steps on the way.

STEPS became the metaphor for Lancaster Castle Litfest and the link between the writing and photography workshops.

Litfest provided an opportunity for the expression of wit, sensitivity, imagination and awareness in connecting word and image. Representation, interpretation, meaning and use of metaphor were explored and despite the many constraints the participants created work which was both unexpected and moving.

We were delighted at the standards achieved and sincerely hope these steps will continue. There should be some seriously fine work in poetry and photography in the future....



IN MATES

Caught in the veins of a skeleton leaf
unsteady as the wind
unsteady as feet

you've blown away blow
and broken the back of a fleshed out habit

now spell me again
how you mispelt defeat



JESUS WOULD HAVE LOVED CAT. C'S

They gave me a list of what's permissible to bring

no sharp objects
no cd's
no mobile phones

I handed them an inventory:

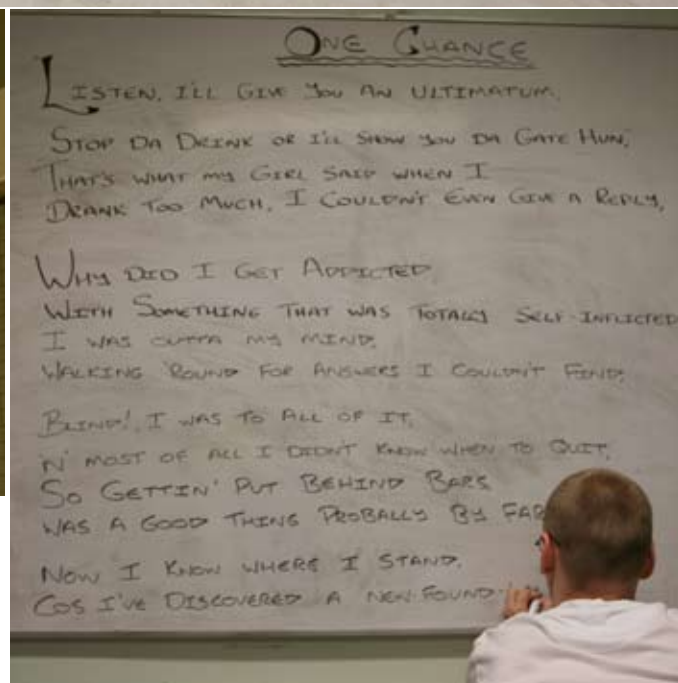
peachstone
feather
paper
violin

and whilst they were looking
I walked my dangerous heart straight in

WHY DID I GET ADDICTED
WITH SOMETHING THAT WAS TOTALLY SELF-INFLICTED?
I WAS OUTTA MY MIND,
WALKING 'ROUND FOR ANSWERS I COULDN'T FIND,



It feels as though the pen and the paper are of each other
“where did we come from?”
“what is our purpose?”
“where are we going?”



WHEN I'M BACK IN DA COMMUNITY,
SO I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY,
TO SAY DRINK WON'T MAKE YOU HAPPY,
IT JUST MAKES YOU SAD N' VERY SNAPPY,

ULTIMATUM

LISTEN! AN ULTIMATUM
THE DRINK OR THE GATE HUN.

WHY DID I GET ADDICTED?
IT WAS TOTALLY SELF-INFLICTED.
OUTTA MY MIND, ANSWERS I
COULDN'T FIND.

BLIND! I WAS TO ALL OF IT.
DIDN'T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT.


BUT NOW I KNOW WHERE I STAND,
FOUND A NEW FOUND LAND.

I'M SOBER 'N' WILL STICK TO IT IN
OCTOBER.

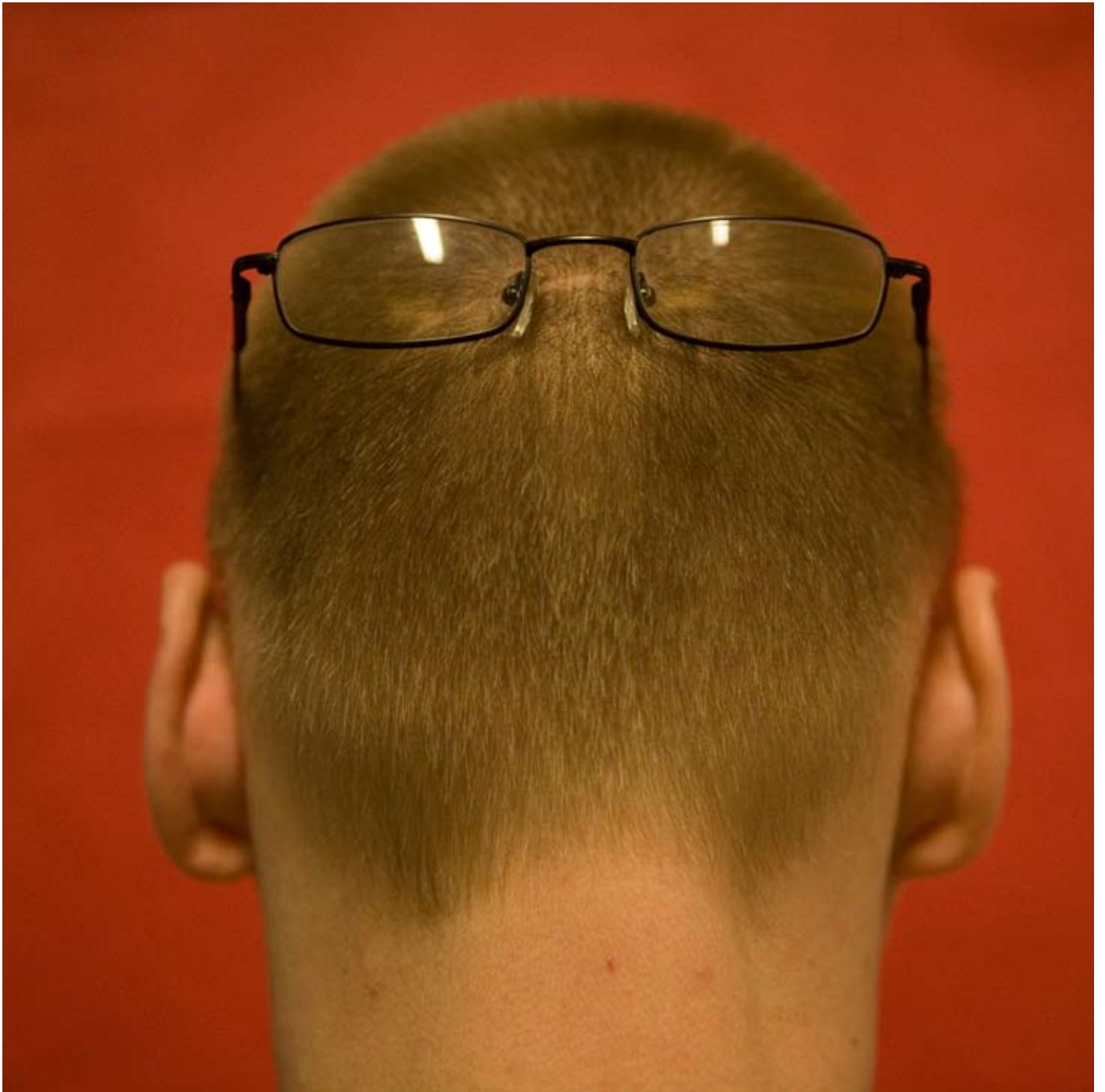
ALL THIS I FOUND OUT DA HARD
WAY,

BUT NOW IT'S A BRIGHTER DAY.

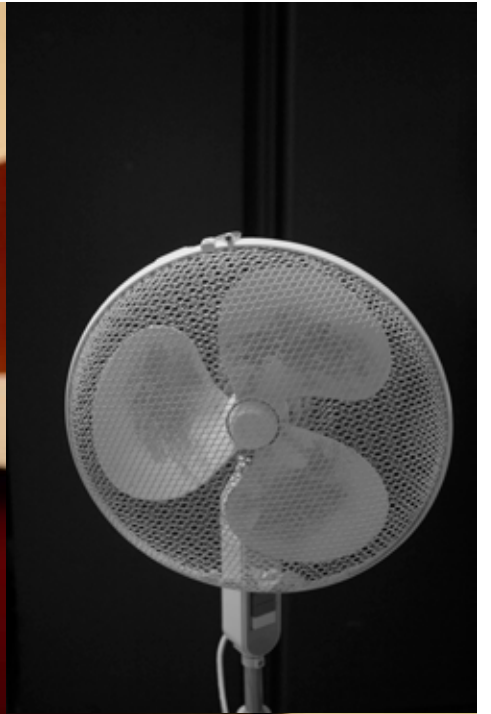
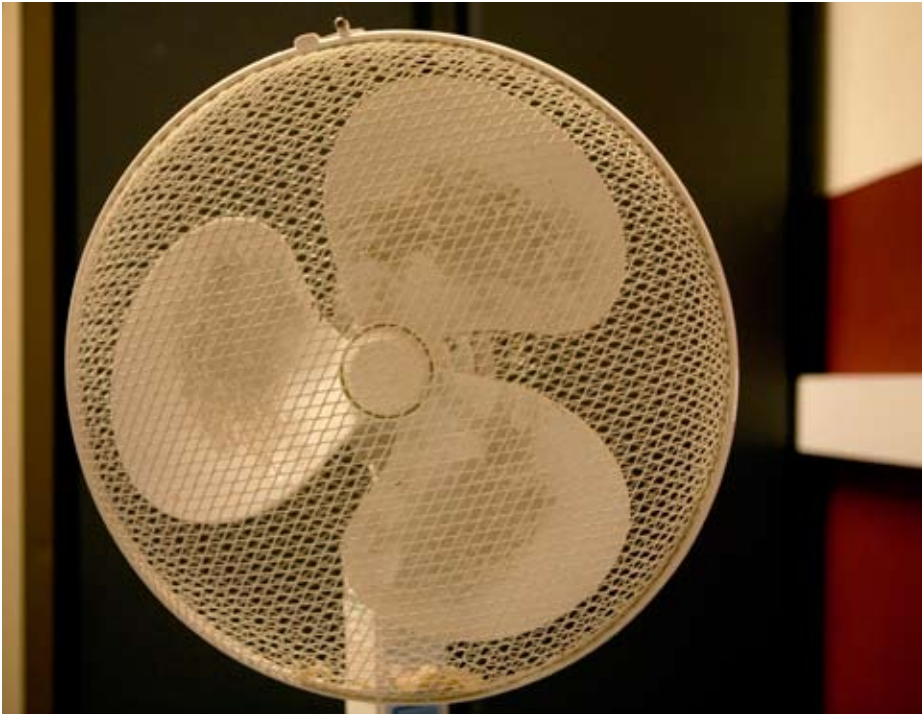


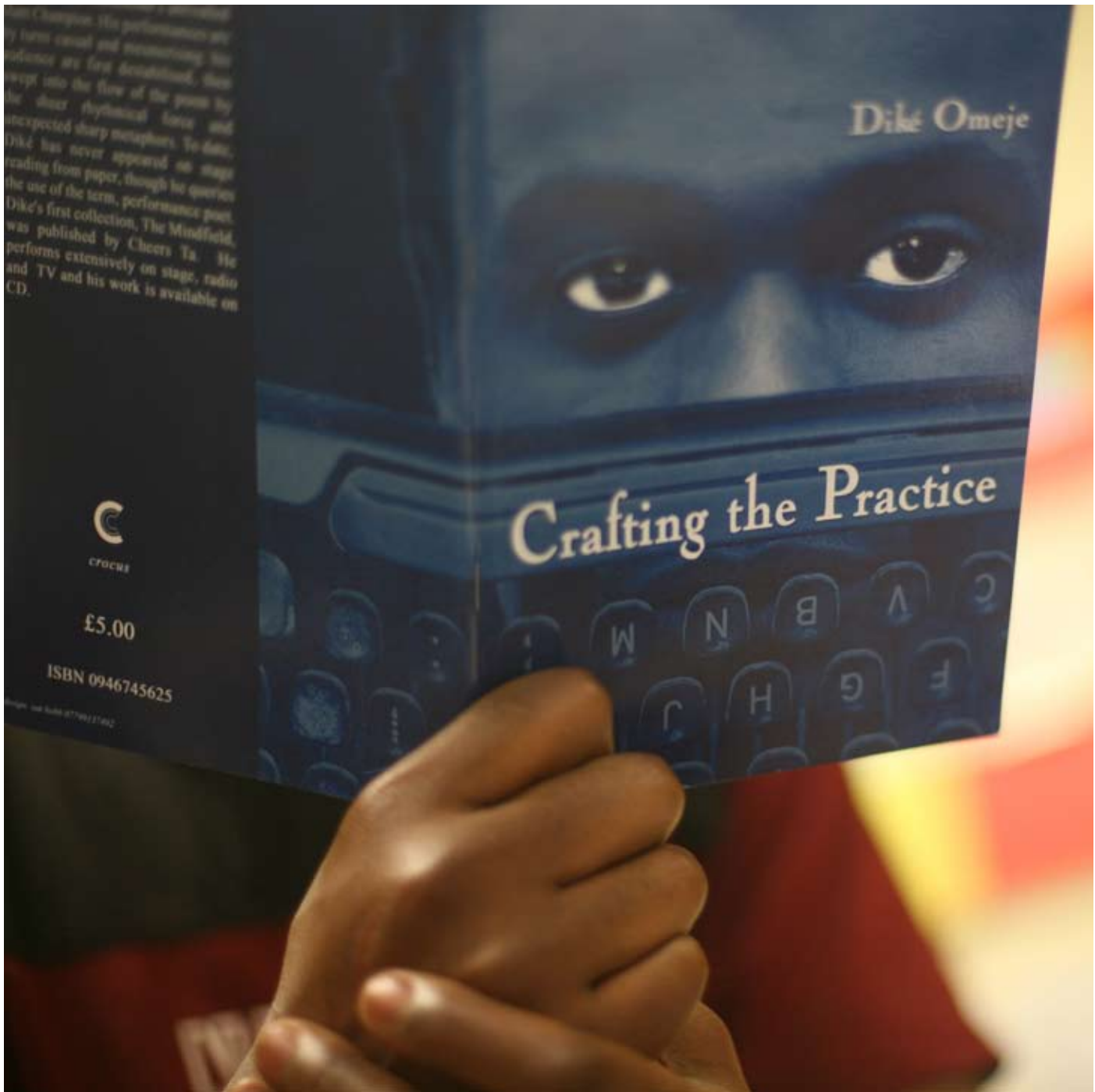


Nine stairs to the top
nine steps that's a lot
a building, a box
it's all just locks
windows and walls
sides and tops
a person, a pearl,
a building, a box
either way we all
get locked in routines
and schedules doing this
doing that everyday the
watch never stops, a pearl
a person can you tell
the difference we're all
just moving the
ride never stops.











me me me me me me me me
| | | | | | | |
me me me me me me me me
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me me me me me me me me
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me me me me me me me me
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me me me me me me me me
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me me me me me me me me
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TECHNOLOGY
OVER
LITERATURE

LITERACY VS BINARY

What is literature, what does it mean?
Symbols, scratchings, to see and to read
Hieroglyphics, the subject of pictures making words
'Twas man's earliest civilized forming of prose
From there we have Latin, music to some ears
Colombus, Gallileo, Stargazer and friend
Put letters together, voilà there's a greeting
Add some, take some out, makes some folk take a beating
So many choices from 26 letters
Creates sweet emotions, some chained some unfettered
This is literature words and text
'Tis a live breathing thing, should be nurtured and kept

Binary, secondly is not about words
It's all about numbers, 2 yeah you heard
How many types? A one and a Zero
So how many PC makers are made into heroes?
I could not tell you, I'm not their creator
But if you want me to build you one, we'll talk about it later
Binary is the baseline, how technology was born
In just 50 years, the written word's been torn
Scanned, deconstructed, diluted and beamed
From the bosom of society, cut 'n' pasted onto screens
Analogue to digital, that's the way forward
Can't live without it, just like your bank card
Without electricity PC's won't work
So grab a book, get a chair, sit in sunlight and look
Turn pages and read, get immersed in the soupçon
Enjoyed it? Well done, now get another my son

Your tear hung heavy
like a crystal of spring dew
as we said goodbye

By now it's too late
missed their smiling faces shine
now, they answer back.

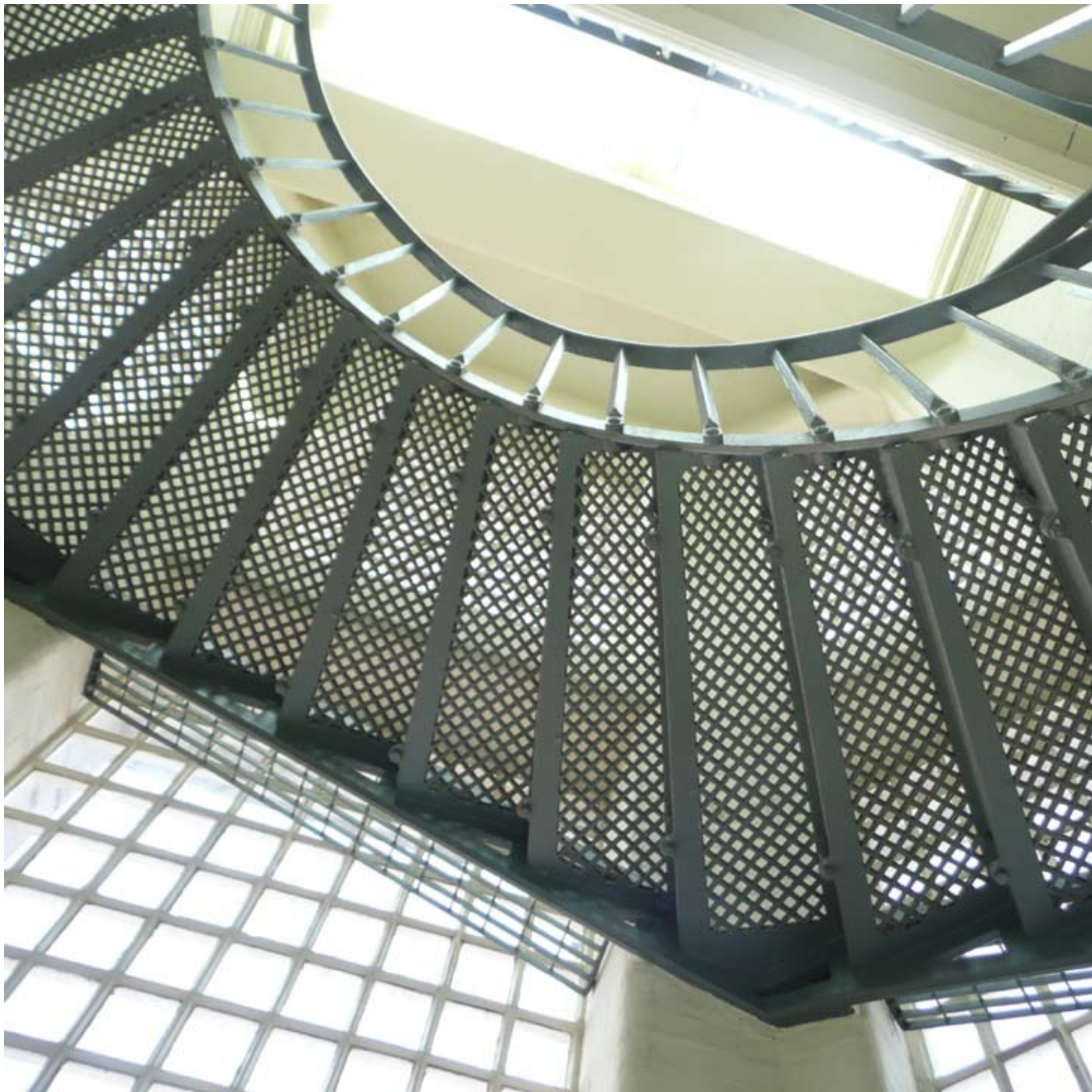
.....The seat I am sat on is uncomfortable to sit on. The room that I am in is plain. I am feeling cold. There is a silence.... I will feel great after the sun has warmed my body through and be ready for what...



LIBERATION FROM INCARCERATION

How long will it be before I am free?
The 6.30 wake up call, ushering my restless soul
Spirit, bright as hot coal
The march of time, like namesake's hare
Heartbeat quickens, pick up my pace
"Goin' home lad?" "yeah" is the reply, back to the race
Of mice and men, but rats is more appropriate!
Peaceful, be patient, nothing happens at once
Through life we flow, some sink, some swim
Few float, others don't!
To what end?

Alpha and omega, starters pistol bang! Run through the tape
We're all winners, but should we leave it to fate?
Waiting is torture, just open the gate!
Stop making that noise or you'll all be out late!
What are they doing? Just what does it take?
To fill out some forms, check bags? Look. Just wait!
Okay, my name's been called, screw looks like he's been on the wine
"I've done my time, bird's flown, no I'll not do more crime."
To the gate, monstrosity, motorised, bleak
Damn bag on my back is making me weak
How much of my life in this bag do I have?
Two 'n a half years my son, not five
Gate's opening now, this is it. I am free...
I don't care if no loved-one's here to greet me.



THE STAIR WELL

Just passing time until I get my dinner,
by a green spiral staircase in Walton Jail.

The sun's shining
bright, right through onto the twisted metal
of the banister.

My eyes start fixating onto the window
made up of fifty squares of frosted
glass obscuring the freedom outside
"Carter to the office, Carter to the office."

The tanoy loudly crackles.

A door swings open and a six foot man
with tatt's all over him, walks out, growls
then starts to climb the cold metal.

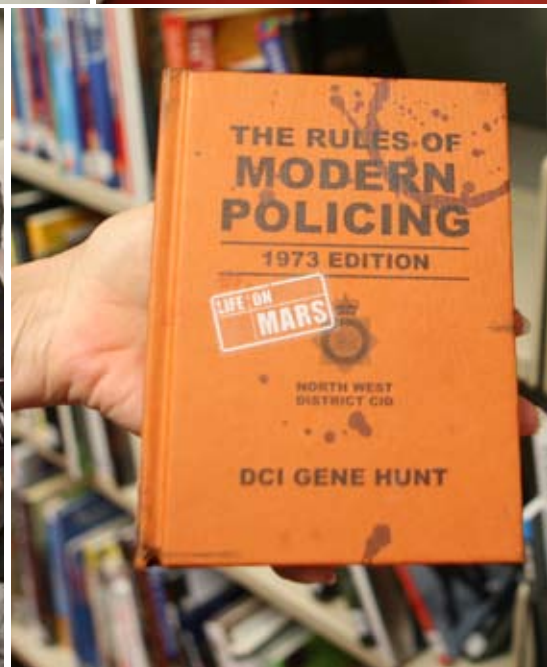
My skin looks like pink crystalline rock glowin'
with the sun 'n' fear 'n' knowledge of where the
stairs lead.

I watch the man headin' up, the noise
is eerie, thud, thud, thud, until all that
was left was his shadow until that disappeared
as well.

This is the staircase to extra days
haunting and deeply upsetting which can make
the hardest man cry,

THESE ARE THE STAIRS.





I walk the spiral stairs, number unknown, flanked with black walls and white speckles like a sky at night. An orange handrail guides me to my destination. I notice the light getting darker the deeper I go.





GRANITE

I was created in fire
the burden was heavy on my shoulders
man made form me
I'm seen by many, touched by few



JU JU

blue represents the sky from where the Gods dwell
black represents water before life - out of darkness came light
red is the colour of blood and blood equals life, human and animal form
white represents the light and the spirit world



Miss works in chaos
Energy, inspiration
gonna be our loss



Walk in fields of green
When you inject it slowly
Here my heart will stay

Heroin is nice
Fresh water springs and flowers
Shame it destroys you

Lonely is the dawn
When the air is cold and fresh
Night has departed

She showed me my heart
I've never seen it before
It bled in her hands



Salt laces on my cheek
My incoherent justice
Pure society

Inmate response to knife crime for young viewers



GeT a L

Life Not a Knife



In the day he has a diamond face
for dealing
in the evening he smokes
his graphite heart
fills with feeling

Don't trust me he says
you can't trust me he says
I'm a thief

I nick cars he says
I rob hearts he says
and mine

skips a beat

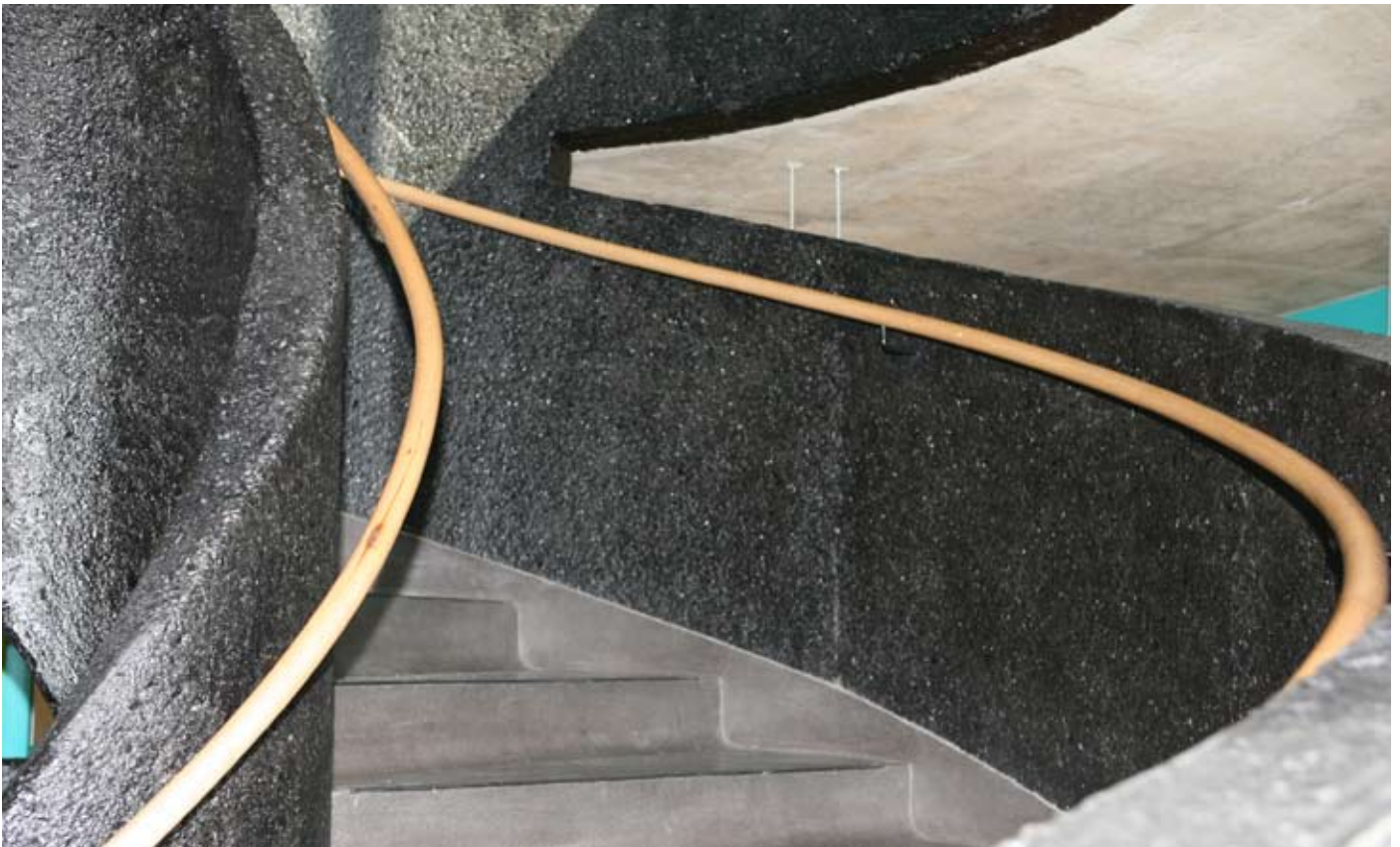
Creatures of the sea
those known while others obscure
fear nothing but man

MOTHER AND CHILD OF PEARL

Mother of pearl
Child of pearl
your beauty lies in your form
and comes from your mother nature.
You were conceived in the water that gives life.
Your appearance is unique.
Your child was born from irritation
irritation that beggars belief.
Who would think that your beautiful body
would be sought by man.
He the man, loves you. His life was taken
to be near you.
It pains me deeply that you were removed
from the embrace of your mother
by ignorant hands.
I too love you
and your beauty is in my heart.
My hands are closed
Mother of pearl
Child of pearl
how beautiful you are.

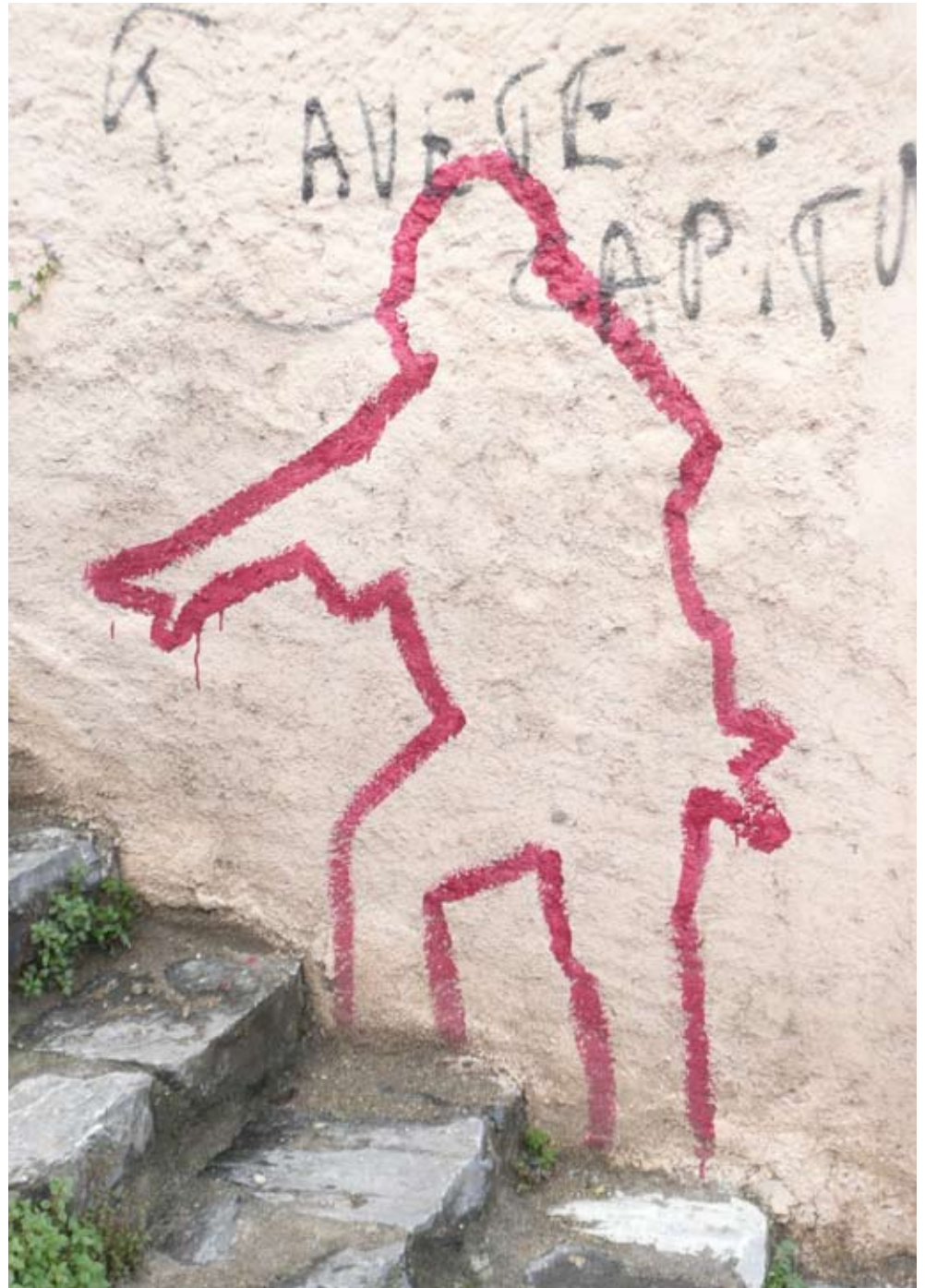


Man very sluggish
Boots two sizes too big
Making his way up the stairs
Dark black glistening wall
Sparkling like fresh cut glass
Green leaf, car park, shop floors,
Market stalls.





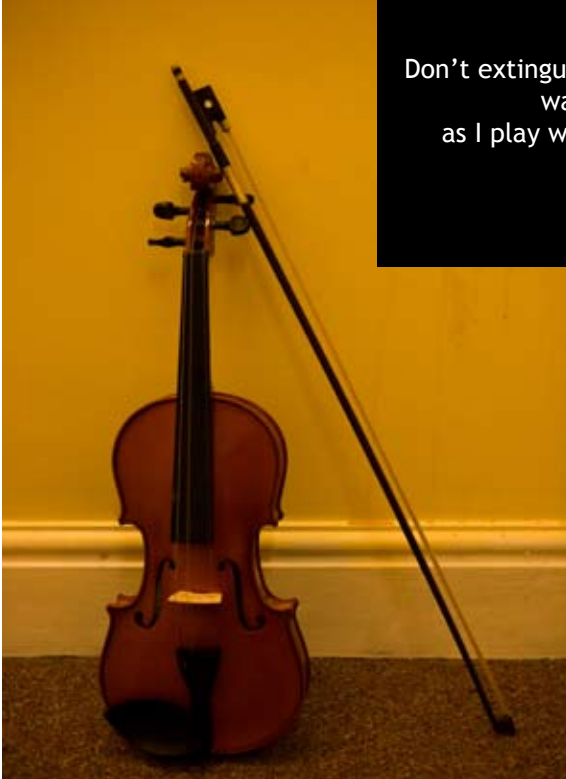
....people change, places change,
time moves on



....people change, places change,
time moves on



Don't extinguish your blue flame eyes
watch me burn
as I play with uncontrolled fire.





IT'S A HIGH TING

Two o'clock in the mornin' 'n' I'm sitting here off my face,
cleaned the pad twice like it's some kinda race,
my heads doin' ninety with nowhere to go,
'n' when I move my hand it looks dead slow,

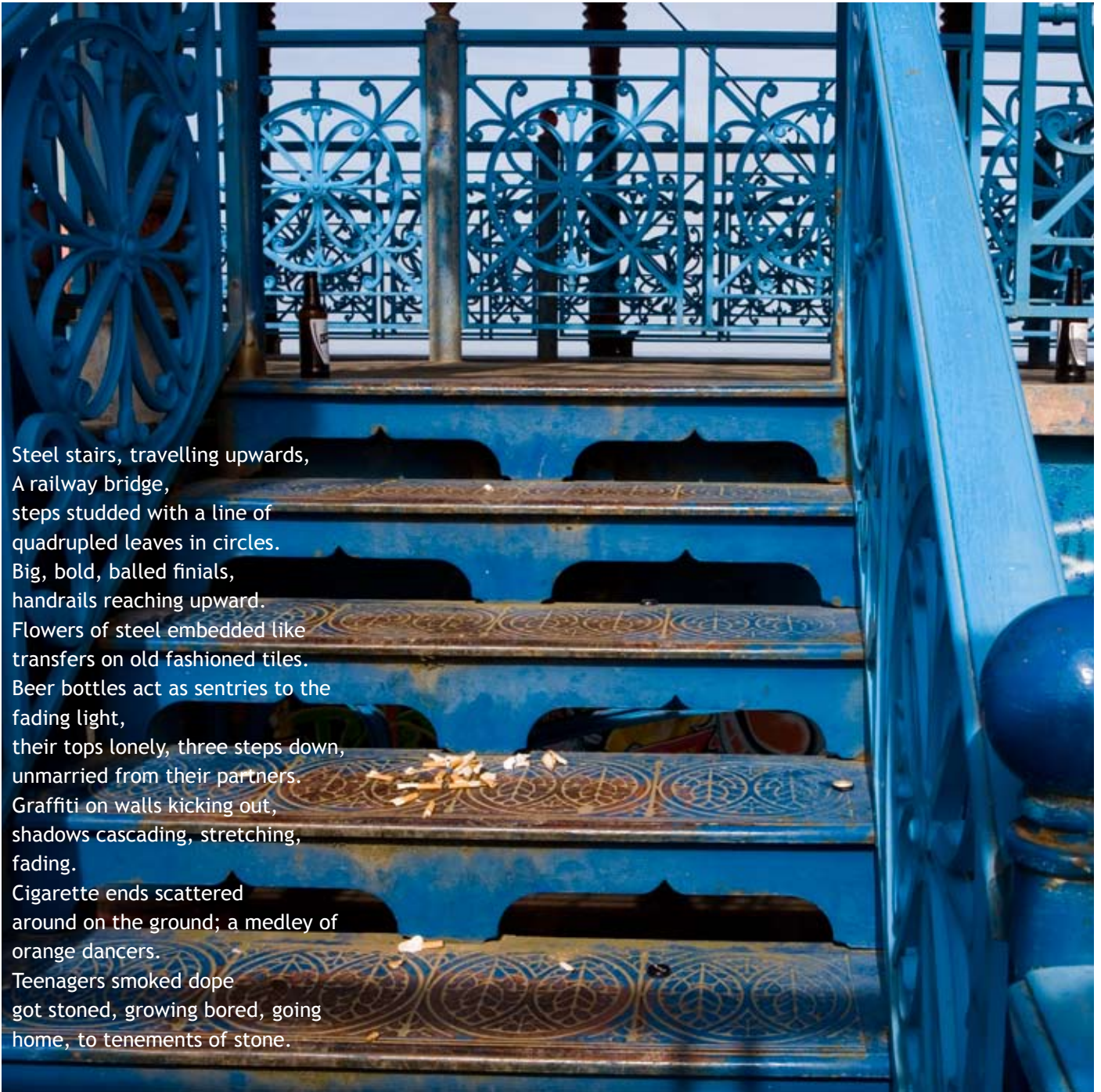
I'm lookin' in the mirror, but I'm not lookin' back,
my heart started poundin' like I'm seconds from attack,
there's nothing on t.v. so I'll put on some tunes,
now I've started dancin' like a fuckin' helium balloon,

You should've seen it man, I think I'm fuckin' It,
just when the screw looked in and said "why yer dancin' like a tit?"
then he starts whistling', so I know he's not arsed,
fuck him anyway, he's only a wannabe nee-nar,

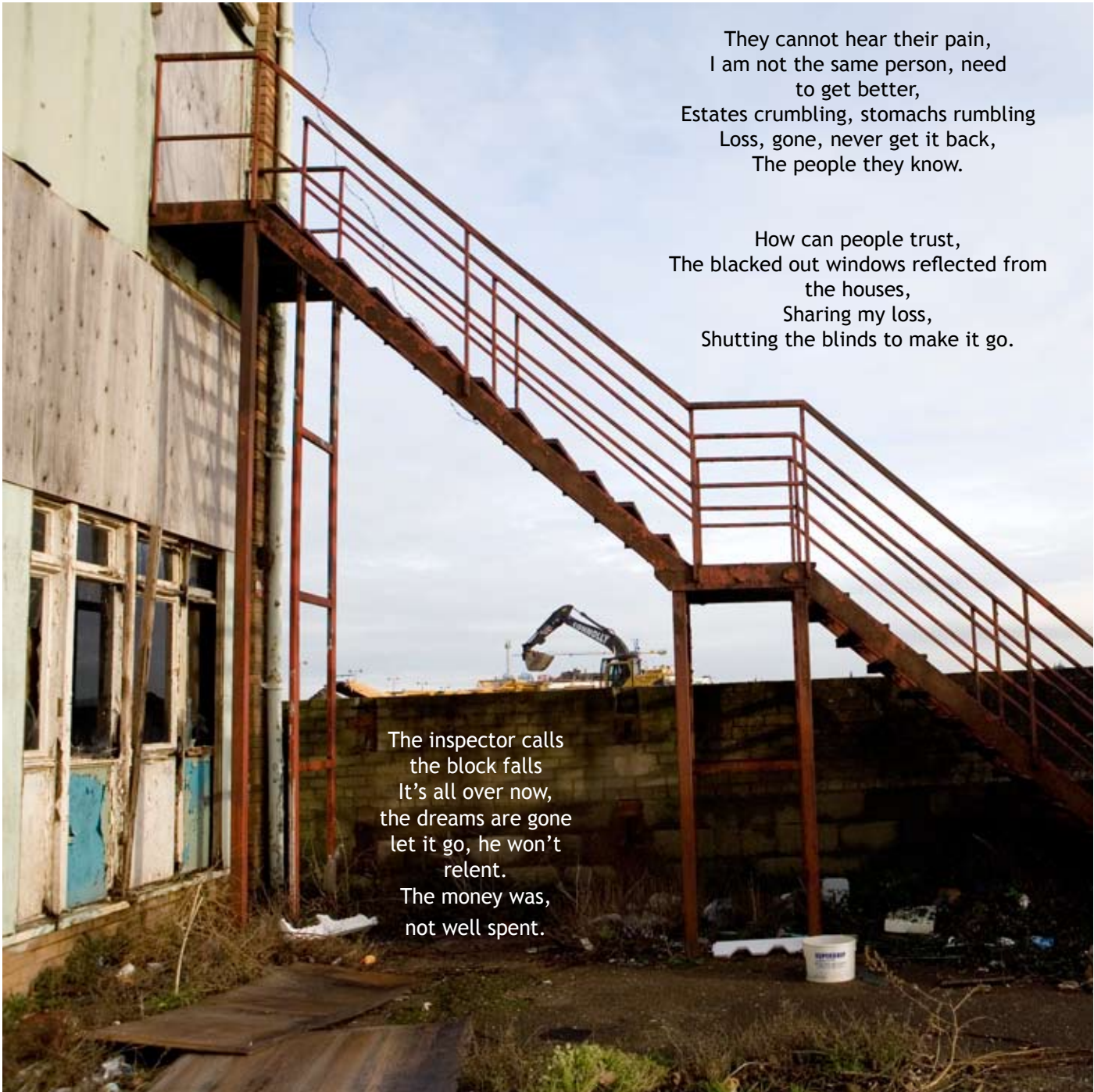
Now I have to sit down 'cos my head's startin' to spin,
I feel like a victim, who's been put in a wheelie bin,
somebodies tellin' me that I should keep off the snow,
I think it's because I'm having a conversation with me big toe,

I told him about this time when I got nicked off me tits,
me toe started laughin', honest! He was in fuckin' bits,
he said "you're crazy, you're a really funny guy,"
he wanted to know how I got so fuckin' high,

So we sat there 'n' talked until it got light,
let me tell you now, he can't half talk some shite,
now that's my rhyme about the night when I was off my tits,
me toe says "now den" and I say "in a bit".



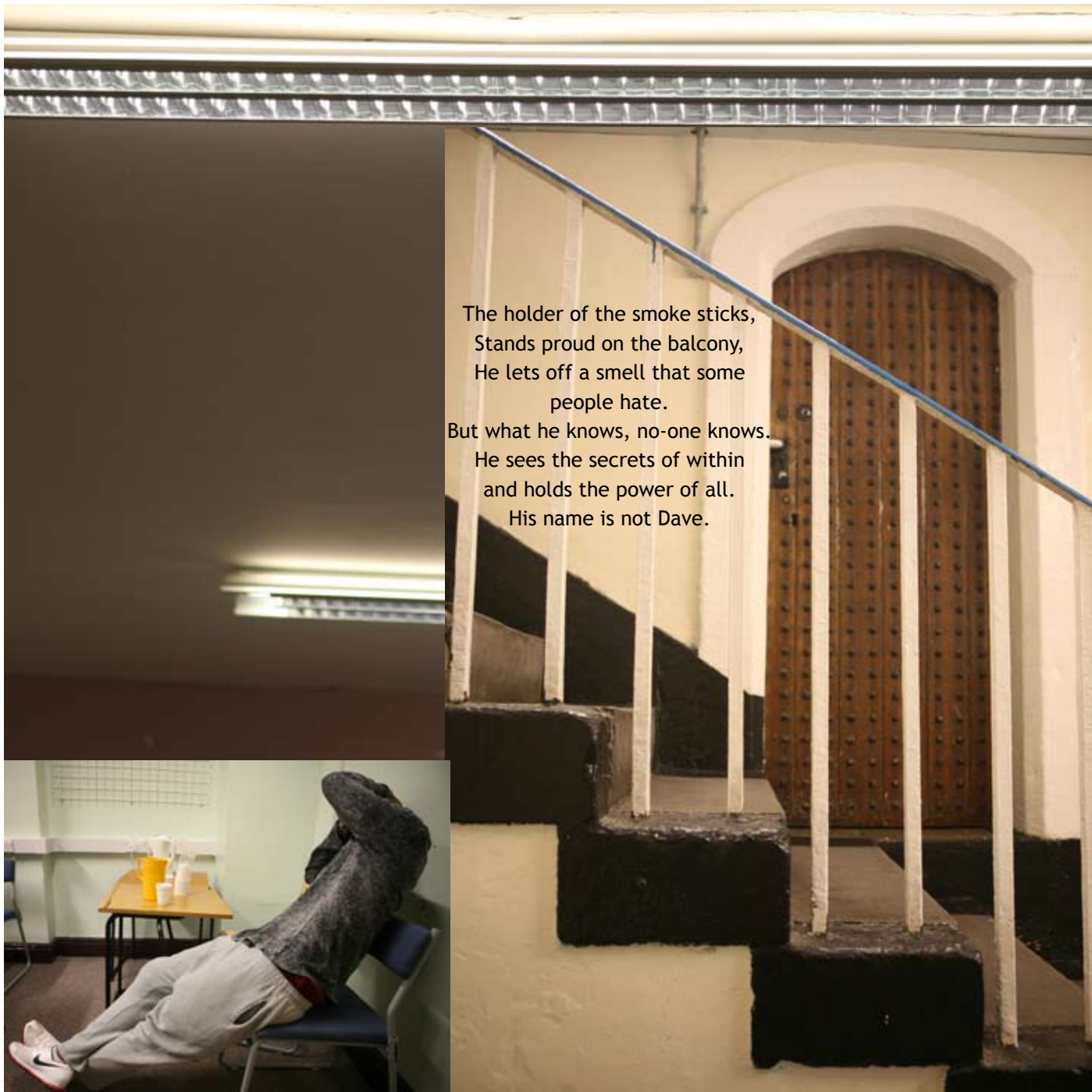
Steel stairs, travelling upwards,
A railway bridge,
steps studded with a line of
quadrupled leaves in circles.
Big, bold, balled finials,
handrails reaching upward.
Flowers of steel embedded like
transfers on old fashioned tiles.
Beer bottles act as sentries to the
fading light,
their tops lonely, three steps down,
unmarried from their partners.
Graffiti on walls kicking out,
shadows cascading, stretching,
fading.
Cigarette ends scattered
around on the ground; a medley of
orange dancers.
Teenagers smoked dope
got stoned, growing bored, going
home, to tenements of stone.



They cannot hear their pain,
I am not the same person, need
to get better,
Estates crumbling, stomachs rumbling
Loss, gone, never get it back,
The people they know.

How can people trust,
The blacked out windows reflected from
the houses,
Sharing my loss,
Shutting the blinds to make it go.

The inspector calls
the block falls
It's all over now,
the dreams are gone
let it go, he won't
relent.
The money was,
not well spent.




The holder of the smoke sticks,
Stands proud on the balcony,
He lets off a smell that some
people hate.
But what he knows, no-one knows.
He sees the secrets of within
and holds the power of all.
His name is not Dave.



THIS IS NOT THE TIME OR PLACE

This isn't the time or place
This isn't a piece of cake
This isn't sublime
This isn't a cherry blossom
This isn't an 84,000 door corridor
This is not impermanence
Nor a very wry smile

What happened to Summer
did someone put it in a suitcase?
What happened to Winter?
I loved a good old sledge chase
What happened?



I have climbed mountains
as I tried to match up to
your expectations

Time has passed
So much time
Finding comfort in repetition
In routine, in sameness
Time has passed
But not enough
Memories remain
Locked away, kept safe
Time has passed
That's all that is left
Costing nothing
But asking a lot
Time has passed
All gone, all used up
Nothing is left
Just time, more time.

Tick tock tick tock time is of the essence
I need to get home

All I'm doing is walking walking walking I
don't seem to be getting no closer

Tick tock tick tock time's moving fast but I
feel like I'm going nowhere

Why did I drink so much when I know the effect
it has on my feather mind as it floats in the
sea of consequence

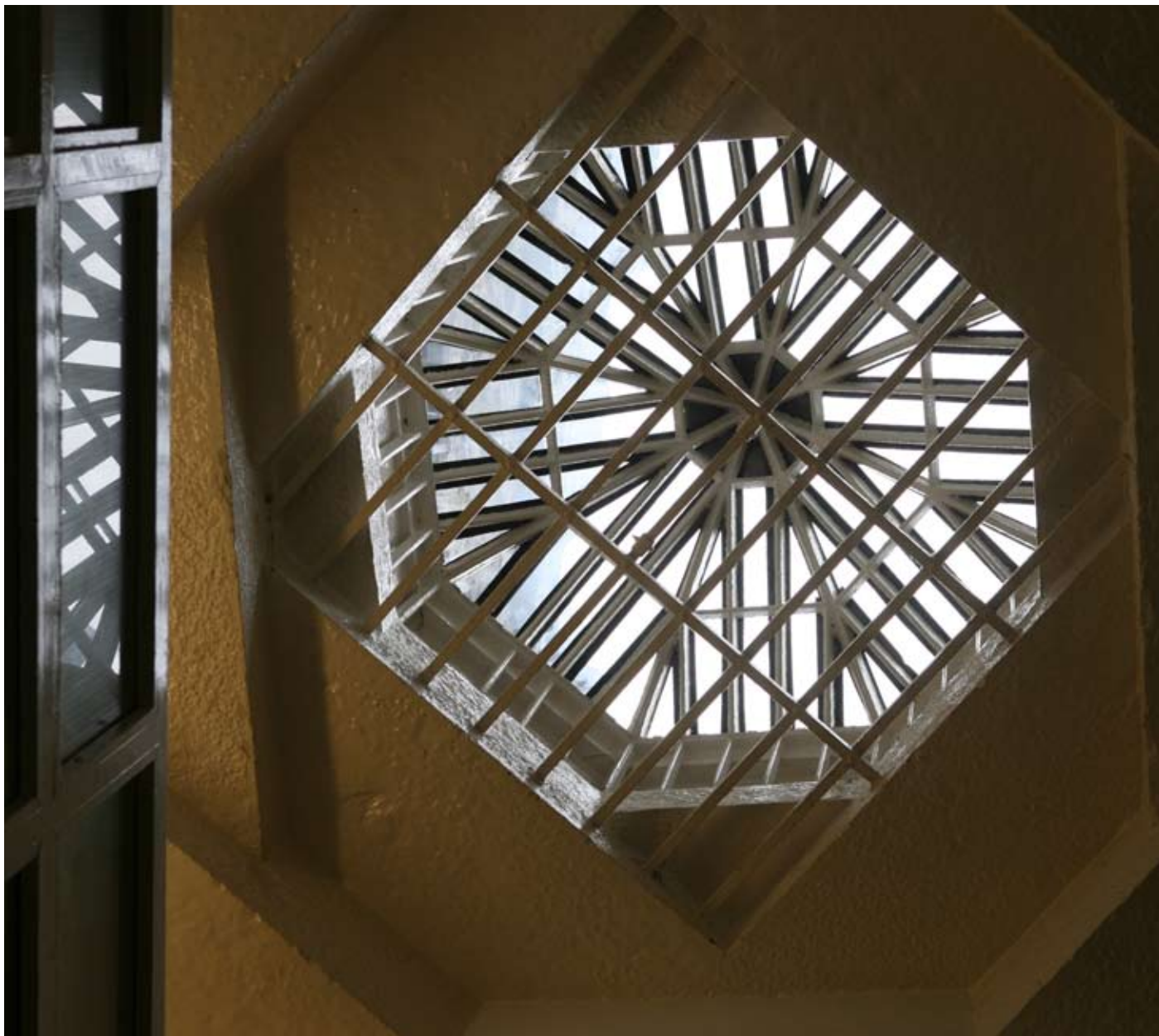
Tick tock tick tock times moving faster still
these steps are getting harder

Did I have to come this way, what was I
thinking

Tick tock tick tock I feel like I'm going
in circles like I'm walking round my watch

How far is it now am I anywhere near the
summit will I get to where I'm going times
moving faster need to get home

Tick tock tick tock time is a substance
I am chasing standing at the entrance
of time.



my little free bird ...you stood by watching my heart burn
I can see the blackness take you back
I watch as a year's counselling is consumed.....
this is a no smoking area, wooden chair, fire extinguisher, carpet floor...



WHAT CAN I DO!

What can I do to show you
these feelings deep inside
the ones that torture me
and tear me open wide

The pain that is consistent
striking hard and heavy blows
numbing, shocking entity
from head right through to toes

Imagine 10,000 volts
Imagine ten thousand more
multiply these by six
and maybe you'll know the score

It hurts like fuck
to feel this way
but what more can I do
don't tell me to fall to my knees
stop telling me to pray

Does anyone understand me
does anyone feel the same
or am I really useless
at playing life's little game



The lady struggles outside the door
Her possessions lying on the floor
No one comes to help or aid
To do that would be such a chore
Bending down she gathers up her belongings
Ignoring others deprecating stares
No one comes to help or aid
To do that would mean they were aware
They would know where she spent the night
alone, afraid and numb
No one came to help or aid
They don't care they're scum
To do that would not be fun

“THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD GO I”

The butterfly did flutter by
and looked down to the ground
There among half eaten leaves
The caterpillar was bound

