**Ledbury**

Ledbury, your words are older than me, your ink hiding in the wrinkles

of pages, of people who have been sewing secrets into verses before I even picked up

The Hungry Caterpillar. Is this to you what it is to me – a line break

from the rest of the world, all that isn’t poetry? Except, where I’m from,

Yorkshire’s pen and ink revolutionaries create metaphors on mobile phones

outside of Dave’s Chippy, piecing together a rhyme in the rows of Barnsley market,

hiding ballads on Stagecoach buses, sweeping lyrics from underneath pub tables.

Or we might whisper back a sonnet to those who will take care of it in a half-lit café,

in a cosy cluster, a breathless gathering of stanzas, just loud enough to taste.

Ledbury, does the staccato beat of a slam poem slip through the cracks

between the quaint houses, or sway in the flowering hanging baskets,

or settle like sugar in depths of someone’s coffee? Does it feel the same

as hearing it spoken – drinking in the story of someone else’s home,

someone’s dreams, someone else’s dinner table fights?

And, festival poets, do you think in neat couplets or does every childhood

memory rush into one? Do you speak in endless streams of list poems

or puff out the short, sharp breath of a haiku - making ghosts

out of grieving similes that evaporate just seconds later?

Maybe people are the real poetry, words chained together by linked arms,

commas and full stops breaking them up into small pieces for us to keep

on our shelves, and good poems like old friends, staying for a brew

and to steal a chip, but never really leaving.