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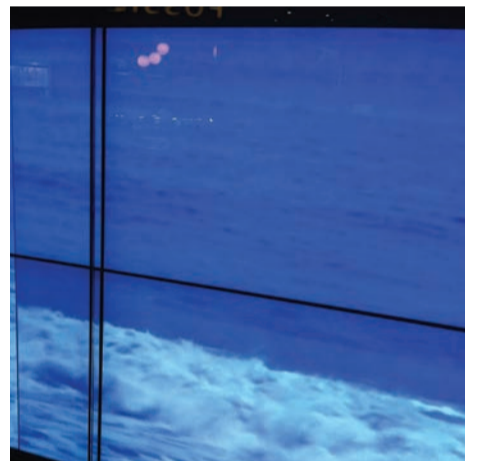
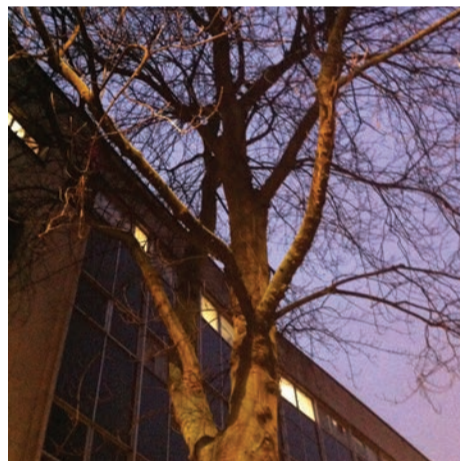
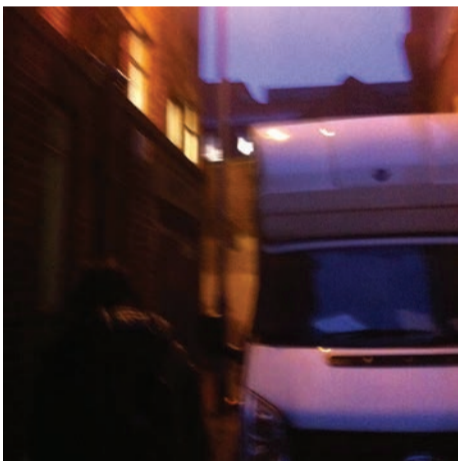
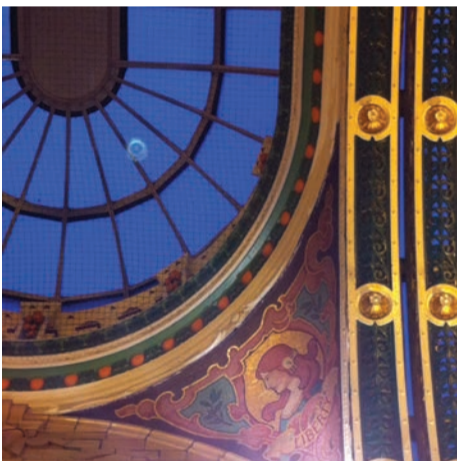
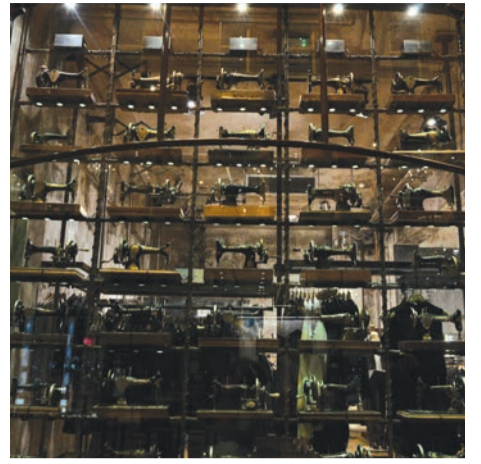
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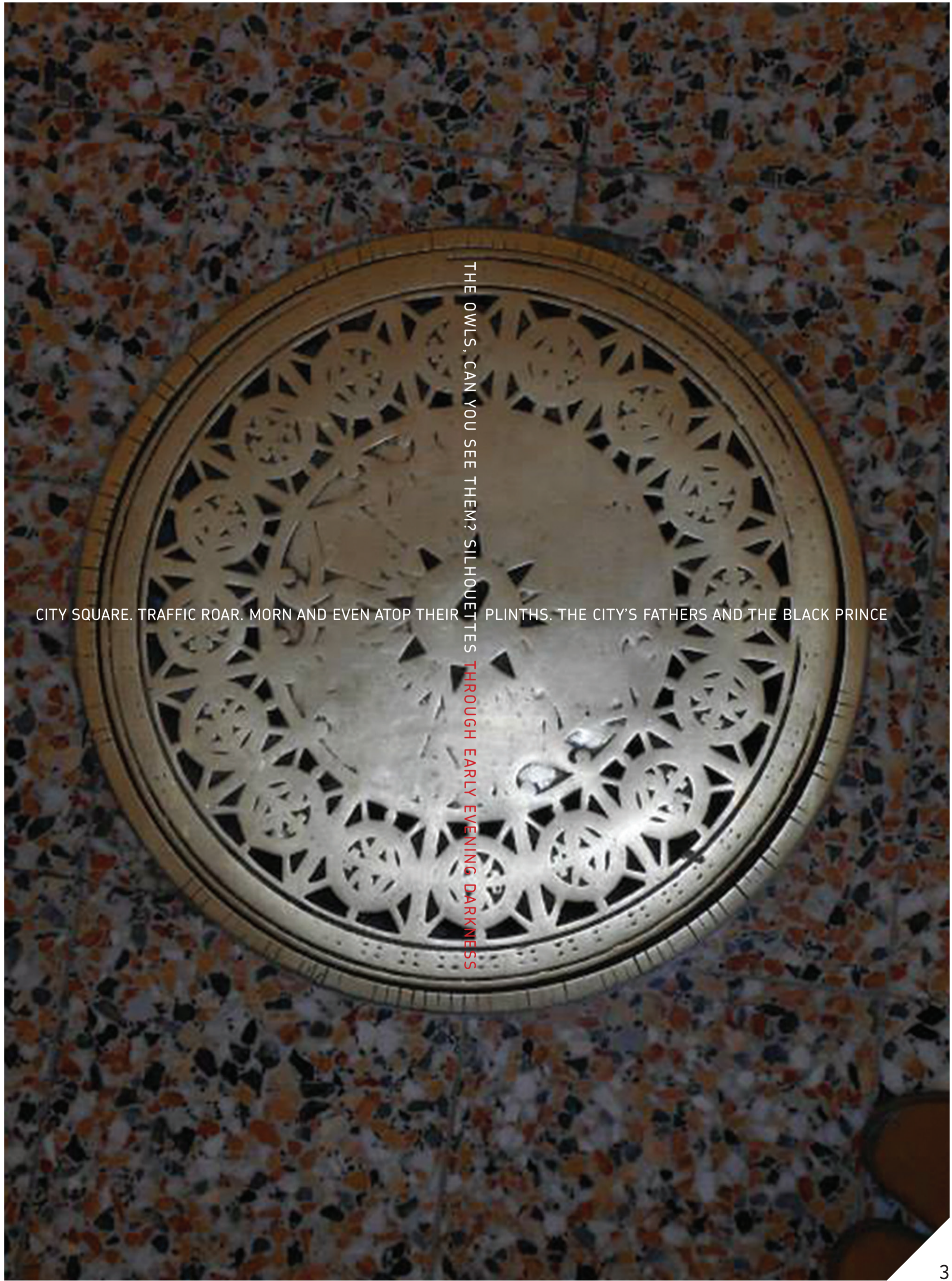
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# URBAN CONSTELLATING

ESSAYS AND STUFF ABOUT LEEDS BY ZOË THOMPSON AND LYNNE HIBBERD





CITY SQUARE. TRAFFIC ROAR. MORN AND EVEN ATOP THEIR PLINTHS. THE CITY'S FATHERS AND THE BLACK PRINCE

THE OWLS, CAN YOU SEE THEM? SILHOUETTES THROUGH EARLY EVENING DARKNESS

# URBAN CONSTELLATING

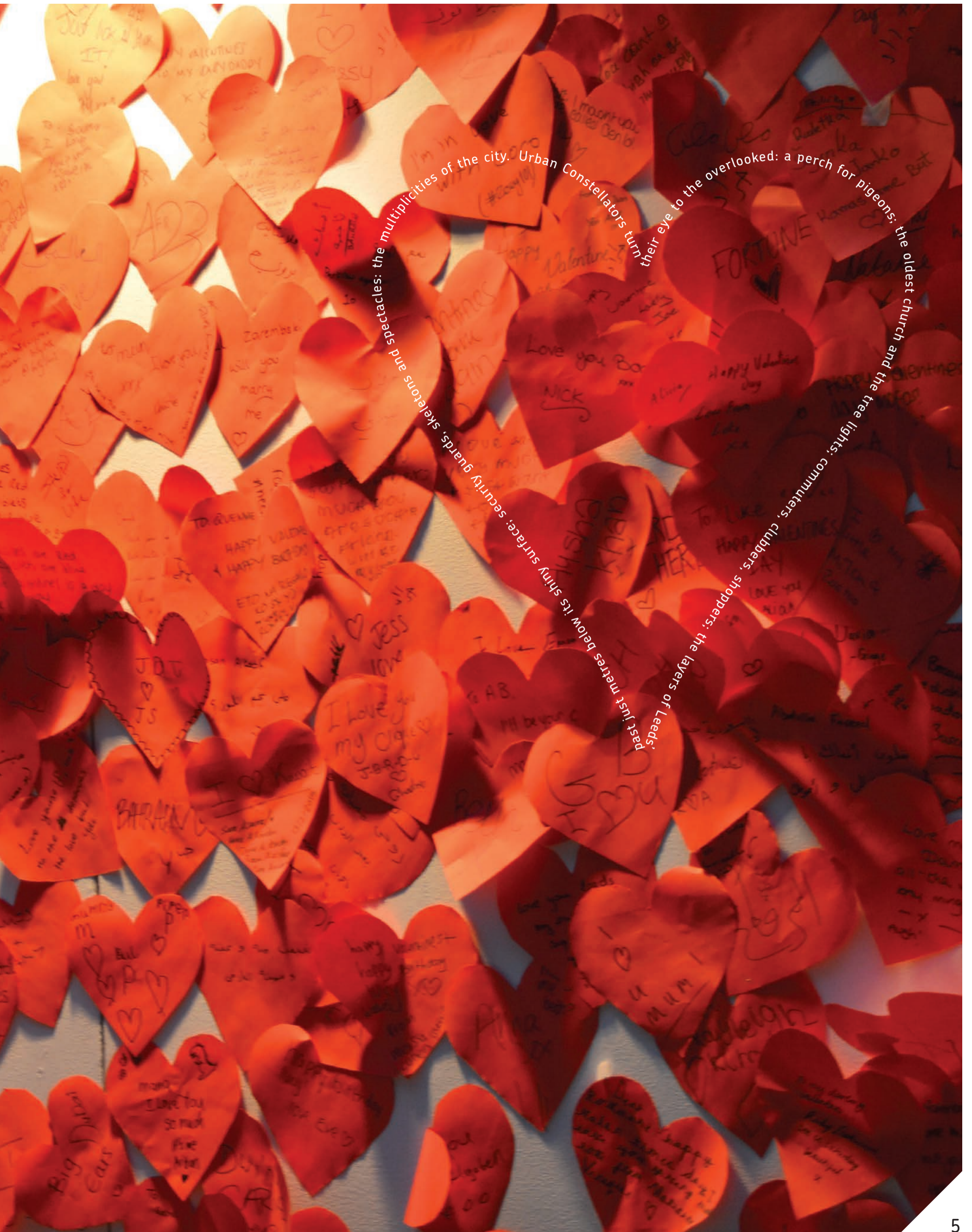
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Will anyone come? Can they hear me over the Museum's music? Who are they anyway? I'm talking about my book. I'm stumbling over my words. What's the word that means ambivalent again? Lynne is talking and in a minute it will be my turn. There are faces I know. I avoid them. There are faces I don't know. But then the faces nod. The eyes smile in agreement. Someone says 'flanerie'. How many of you are from Leeds? Nobody nods. This is going to be a disaster. 'So', I say, 'that's really interesting, without a 'native gaze' you'll cast a different eye on the cityscape' (thanks Walter). We turn our gaze downwards and step across the vast map of Leeds that forms the museum's floor. I tear off tourist maps from a pad and hand them out. Then we are all looking at the map and my power of speech returns. What is the story that Leeds is telling about itself, I ask. Silences. Thinking. 'Shopping' says a voice, 'And also culture', says another. 'Well-connected... look at the prominence of the train station, the bus station. It's walkable, compact'. We stand in a circle. I explain about disrupting this story and ask if anyone has an S in their name. Two hands go up. Stephanie steps forward. She and I kneel on the floor and I hand her a marker. She scrawls a large S across the face of the Leeds map. 'We're going to walk the S', I say. Tell me what you see, psychogeographically, what you hear, smell, taste. The sights you've never noticed before, the overlooked corners that have missed your gaze. 'Do you do this every day?' asks a stranger. 'Or every week?' 'Are you from the museum?' No, we're from Leeds Beckett Uni, but do join us...' 'It sounds really interesting', says the stranger.

We exit into twilight drizzle. Stephanie has the map and leads us to the first point. She and Sarah are Masters of Architecture students. Neither know Leeds. Both are from the South, undergrads at Portsmouth and Kent respectively. Rush hour crowds. Pedestrian crossings. Into Merrion Gardens. 'Has anyone been here before?' People have been past but never through. Didn't know of the church or the gravestones that are fashioned as a pathway. Lights twinkle in bare-branched trees. The stench of marijuana wafts over from the teenage lads huddling against the church wall away from the drizzle. The church café – Age Concern – with its newly-renovated glass atrium, in darkness. Chained gates. A blue plaque. Metal pressed into stone. 1647. A church on this site for 368 years. An eerie face and hand hail us from the window of Sainsbury's staff room. Cardboard. Cut-out. Down and out. Cut back along Mark Lane. Cobbles. Slick with drizzle. The group splits and the leaders lead. The stragglers ponder Dortmund Square. We're missing the fat barrel man. 'What is that?' If we went by it I could tell you. Three heads nod. Jack snaps. It's to do with the fact that Leeds is twinned with Dortmund. That's a fat German guy with a beer barrel. 'Another national stereotype'. Cars, vans, bodies, move.

The lights change and take us into The Light. We pause on the threshold and enjoy the momentary lack of rain and the breeze blowing from the doorway's heater. A pseudo-public place. We can see that. Fake plants and pavement cafes. Covered roof and mediterranean-tiled floor. How can we feel that? What does this place want us → 8





the multiplicities of the city. Urban Constellators turn their eye to the overlooked: a perch for pigeons; the oldest church and the tree lights; commuters, clubbers, shoppers; the layers of Leeds; past just metres below its shiny surface; security guards, skeletons and spectacles;

the oldest church and the tree lights; commuters, clubbers, shoppers; the layers of Leeds; past just metres below its shiny surface; security guards, skeletons and spectacles;



URBAN CONSTELLATING 13 FEB 2015

## CONSTELLATIONS VARIATIONS

A BUNCH OF RANDOMS IN LEEDS CITY MUSEUM PORING OVER A MAP MARKED WITH STEPHANIE'S S. STEPHANIE'S S. WHAT IF WE HADN'T HAD A STEPHANIE? NOT EVERYBODY HAS A STEPHANIE OR EVEN AN S. HOW WOULD YOU DISRUPT THE FLOW? WHAT STORIES DOES THE TOURIST MAP TELL US ABOUT LEEDS? GUM ON THE PAVEMENTS, ON THE COBBLES, ON THE CONCRETE, ON THE GRAVESTONES. IS IT ART? WITH HINDSIGHT IT REMINDS ME OF MOSS PATCHES ON DRYSTONE WALLS. A LITTLE PIECE OF HOME IN LEEDS CITY CENTRE. IS THAT WHY I FIND IT SO FASCINATING? CAN'T STOP SEEING IT NOW. LIVING AND THE DEAD INTERMINGLE. IS THIS DISRESPECTFUL? HOW LONG DO YOU HAVE TO BE DEAD BEFORE IT COUNTS AS A NOT-DEAD SPACE ANYMORE? IT'S GRUESOME. OH I QUITE LIKE IT. KARMA AND EVERYTHING. USE THE FORCE, LUKE. BAD BOYS LOITER IN THE CORNER SMOKING MARIJUANA. ARE THE LIGHTS FROM CHRISTMAS OR IS IT ALWAYS TWINKLY HERE? LONE CYCLIST WAVERS DOWN THE CROWDED PAVEMENT, TWO LEDS MOMENTARILY BLIND ME. I THOUGHT I WAS GOING AGAINST THE FLOW BUT HE LOOKS MORE PRECARIOUS THAN US. ABOMINATIONS, DESECRATIONS, BENJAMIN'S ILLUMINATIONS WALKING PAST THE PIZZA PLACE. DIVERT, DIVERT! HOT GARLIC AND A BLAST OF WARM AIR POURS OUT ON TO THE STREET. I'D USUALLY BE INDIGNANT ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING BUT TONIGHT I STOP FOR A MICRO-BASK AND USE IT AS A SUGAR RUSH. WHO EVEN CHEWS GUM? AND WHO SPITS IT ALL OUT? HOW LONG DOES IT HAVE TO BE HERE BEFORE IT GETS THIS HARD? IT'S EMBEDDED. I GLIMPSE HOME IN THE GUM, THE COUNTRY IN THE CITY.

MOCKING ITALIAN PIZZA PARLOURS AND PARISIAN BISTROS, OUTSIDE INSIDE. CUSTOMERS ARE INVITED TO SIT IN THESE OUTSIDE SPACES AND GAZE ON THE PEOPLE IDLING PAST AND → 9

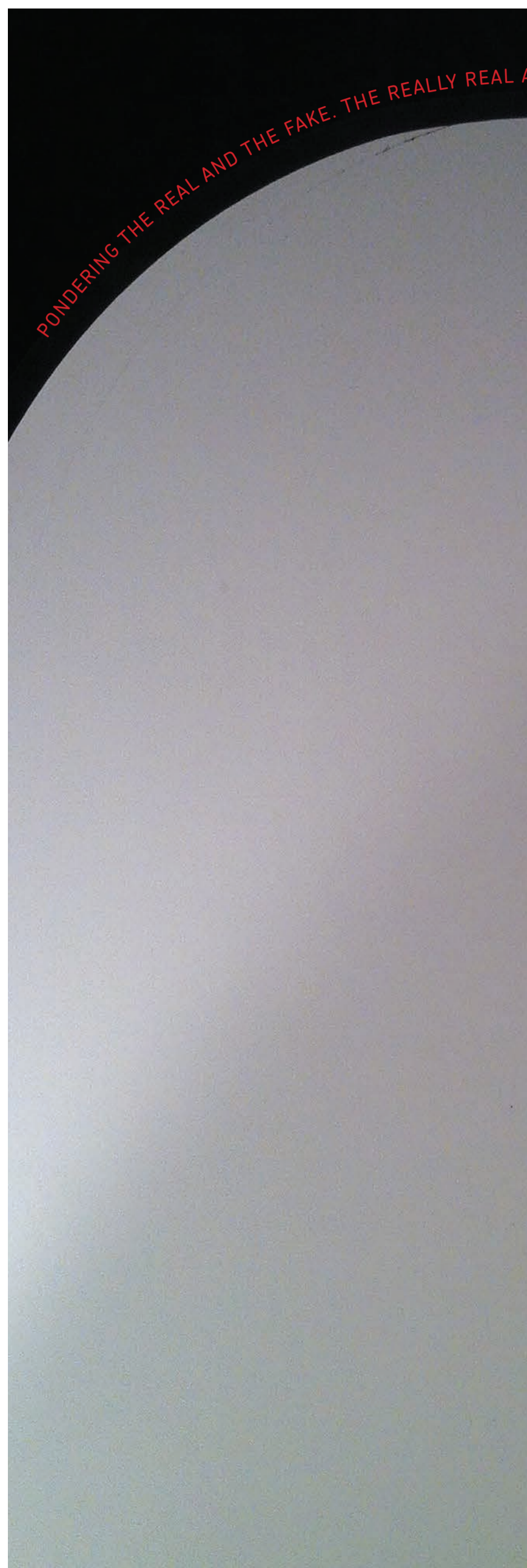


EDUCATION, IMAGINATION, RAMBLINGS AND RUMINATIONS



to do? Shop, eat, view but mostly it's a demand: keep moving. No loitering. Caught on camera, we wave. Snail's pace in peloton form through. The gazers become the gazed. Nervous shifts on too-high coffee bar stools. Branded restaurant clientele look harder at us, and then away in puzzlement. We return every look. Photobooth with stool but no camera. A lit cross fills the space where mirrored glass and lens usually sit. Lynne hams it up. We investigate and draw in the press of authority. Black and gold. Boots. Badges. 'It's for the *Fifty Shades of Grey* premiere', they say. Redundant media technologies provoke the greatest nostalgia. The curtain. The coins. The giddy squash of more than you in the booth. Photobooth selfie a poor substitute. We harpoon xxxx years of technological development in one fumbled click. Katy finds the fossilised floor. Pondering the real and the fake. The really real and the really fake, the fakest real and the fakest fake. Escalator down to love. Love is allowed. Some love. Spontaneity harnessed and sold back to us. We get close. But not too close. We can pause here, linger even. But could we sit down? Could we sleep? Past the brands and out through doors that open for us. A map swap and a new leader. Hotels that were council offices, bars that were banks, coffee shops that were insurance brokers. The financial heart of Leeds. Leeds' flora and fauna: Lions, Griffins, Owls, Horses. Angels. Do Angels count? Writing love hearts. State-sanctioned love is pondered. What wouldn't be allowed? 'I love Jimmy Saville?' says Rachel to gasps of perverse laughter. 'Oh my god yes!' Imagine the faces when they read that one. Disturbing bourgeois complacency, one heart at a time. Buses, heavier rain, suits en masse, wheeled cases on flagstones; the route to the railway 4.35pm.

Butts Court. Short Street. Leeds' shops are revealed to be all Queen Anne front and Queen Mary back. Service entrance. Multi-story. Commercial bins. Carmelia leads us up and through. Albion Street. Across the traffic. Collect at the kerb and take a risk. Through The Core we talk Brazil. Brasilia was built for the car. A utopia that never lived up to its promise, like Birmingham. Even my city has a small Brasilia, say Carmelia. Queens Arcade ahead. We take a left and plump for Thornton's instead. Narrow, lit, covered space. 18??. It's all about the timing. The Ivanhoe Clock welcomes us with its elaborate chime. Le quotidien merveilleux. Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Richard the Lionheart. We gaze up in wonder. And silence, chat drowned out by clanging chimes. Remarks are made about Robin's shapely legs. I check the details on Wikipedia. Pigeons aren't welcome, Katy notices. Tom comes out of Welcome, his skateshop. Chance encounters. Yeah Emily mentioned it. Sadly she couldn't be here. Gentleman's outfitters. Ironwork and tiles. Elaborate fruit and veg abound from the ceiling rose. 'Is it anything to do with Thornton's chocolate?' Unanswered questions pondered. The sumptuous delights of consuming. Scopophilic pleasures. Elegant slopes guide us onto Briggate. Bridge Gate. Street to the Bridge. 5.10pm. Friday. Cross cutting the vertical crowd. Another arcade: County. Matcham's grand vision. Locally kilned pottery, ironwork. Hunslet? Burmantofts? Victorian values etched into the ceiling. Civic virtues. Pomegranates fit to burst. Labour. Tiles. Splendour. Sewing machines. Leeds' past? Its history of cloth, textiles, wool. Tailoring. Nicely captured by the repetition of the display. All Saints. Candid Camera. No, it's like that in all their shops. West Village, NYC: Sewing machines. Pomo trickery. The invisible class and race wall. Watch the shift. Beep Beep Beep we're leaving. It's letting us know it knows. Gap on the landscape; promises of pleasures to come: The 'John Lewis' effect. Men's names. Men's names. Men's names. Down Vicar Lane up Fish Street. Ginnels. Nature takes its revenge. The return of the repressed: ferns in gutters, a bloom from the hopper head. Music, dankness, the tanning salon really wants us: tempting passersby with → 13





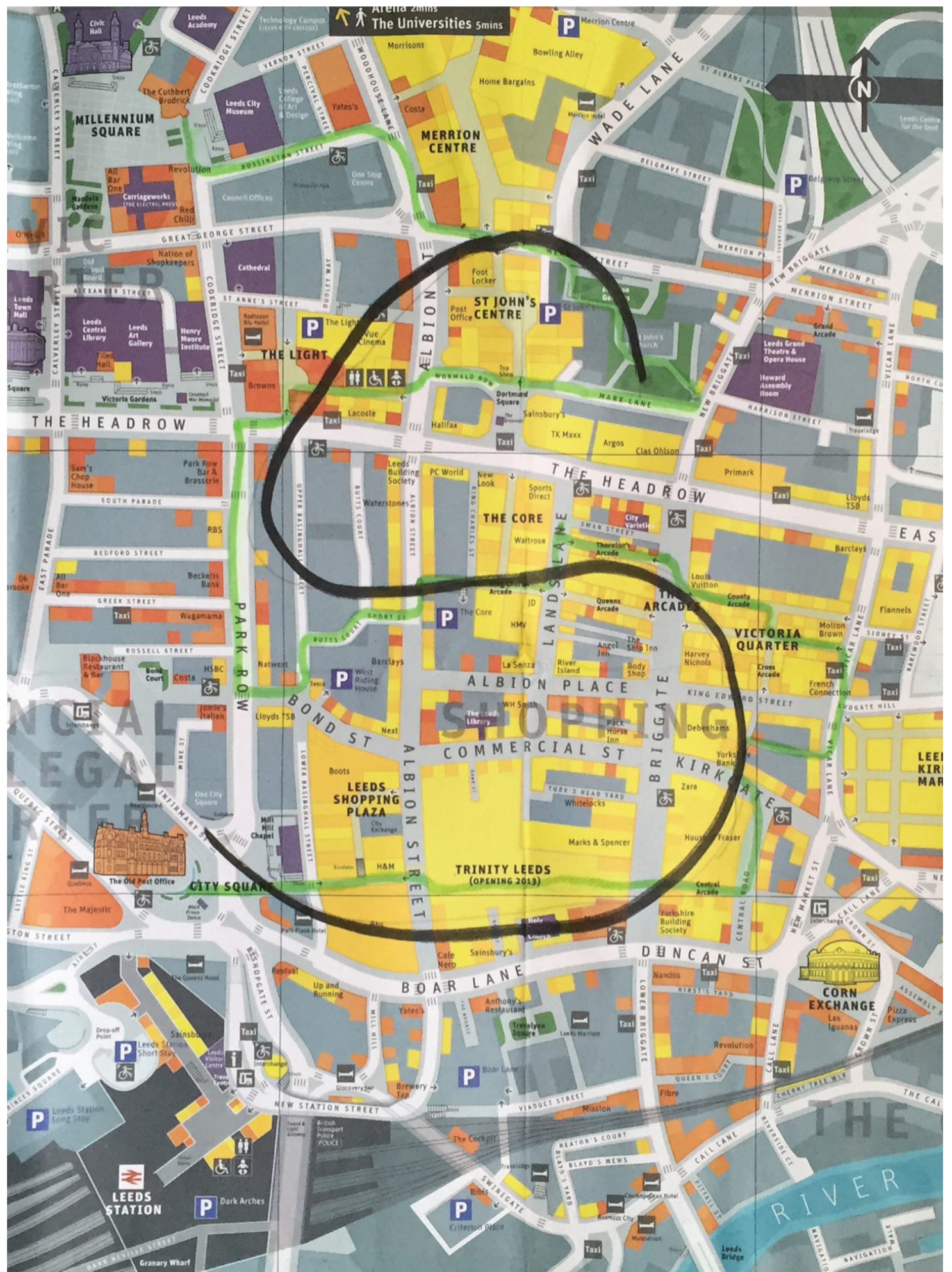


# THE VOICE OF LEEDS' MAP

YELLOW, PURPLE, ORANGE: PRIMARY COLOURS DEMANDING YOUR ATTENTION, MY MODUS OPERANDI. LOOK AT ME, AND ME AND ME. BANG IN THE CENTRE. RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE. SHOPPING. SHOPPING. SHOPPING. OH AND DID I MENTION SHOPPING. I THINK YOU'LL FIND THAT IF YOU FOLLOW MY YELLOW PARTS YOU'LL BE MORE THAN ADEQUATELY SEEN TO ON THE SHOPPING FRONT. IF YOU'VE TIME, WHEN YOU'VE BEEN ROUND ALL MY YELLOW BITS, IT'S ONLY A, OH, SAY, FIVE MINUTE WALK, AS MY GRID PATTERN TELLS YOU, TO THE PURPLE BITS. YOU MIGHT LIKE

THOSE TOO. WELL, SOME OF YOU MIGHT. IT'S MY, WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL, 'RAREFIED SECTION'. CULTCHA. YOU KNOW, GALLERIES AND THAT. SIGNIFICANT CIVIC BUILDINGS. WHERE THE LIONS ARE. WHILST WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE DESIGNED BY THE SAME FELLA WHO DID THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE ONES? HE HAD A PRACTICE ON LEEDS. YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY HAVEN'T WORN AS WELL AS LONDON'S.

MIGHT BE THE HARSHER NORTHERN CLIMATE. BUT YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER, I AM SIGNIFICANTLY DRYER THAN MANCHESTER. HAVE YOU SEEN MY YELLOW PARTS? HA, JUST DON'T WANT YOU TO MISS THOSE AND I KNOW YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO STAY ALL DAY. OF COURSE, I'M VERY WELL CONNECTED. CHECK OUT MY DARKENED GREY WITH WHITE LETTERING BLOBS: RAILWAY, BUS AND COACH WILL GET YOU IN AND OUT IN JUST A TEN MINUTE WALK FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE. I MEAN I MUST TELL YOU I KNOW I'VE MENTIONED MY YELLOW BITS QUITE A BIT BUT I'M ALSO PRETTY KEEN ON MY ORANGE SECTIONS. YES, THANK YOU YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY DO MAKE QUITE A NICE THREAD THROUGH THE CITY. I MEAN, I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY SAY



IN THAT LONDON, I HAVE A LOT OF ORANGE. INDIE SCENE? INDEPENDENT SHOPS AND CAFES? UM, OH WELL I DON'T REALLY HAVE MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THOSE. IS IT A STUDENT THING? ANYWAY, ENOUGH OF THAT WE HAVE GOT BRANDS GALORE. ALL THE MAIN FOOD CHAINS. MULTIPLE BRANCHES IN SOME CASES. JUST IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING WHAT NOT TO MISS THOUGH, CAN I DIRECT YOU BACK TO MY YELLOW? YES, I REALLY DO FEEL YOU SHOULD SEE IT. THE 'KNIGHTSBRIDGE OF QUEEN'S NORTH', I KNOW. I DO TRY.



A WEREWOLF LANDS HEAVILY ON THE ROOF, A POOL OF BLOOD OOZES INTO A CEILING. THAT WOULD FREAK ME OUT TOTALLY

blaring soft rock. Tattoo parlour. Back alley cashpoint. Safe? Nightsafe. Dean wonders why anyone would. Cold bark on un-gloved hand: nature. Juxtaposed. Hemmed in. Surviving. Why just this one? Maybe there was a row, says Sarah. Sixties brutalism signals possible clues; erasure. Dean and Jack at the helm. The weird arcade with more upstairs than down, trying to hang on to Trinity's coat-tails. Greggs has gone hipster. Industrial lights hang in triumvirate over banquet seating.

## Minerva. Athena? The one with the owl.

Ah, the owl. The Leeds bird. Wisdom, industry, what else? Trinity: just the latest version of all those covered spaces of commerce, spectacle and luxury. Augmented space. Interpellated via your phone. Airport. Concourse architecture. The Gruen transfer taken up many notches. The itch in your palms like in duty free. Spend spend spend. Customer lounge. Black sky through criss-cross glass. Werewolves bleed on this roof. Chrome, glass, RnB muzak. The draft that runs through. Which way? Escher-esque. Deliberate. Predictable. Hollister's darkened store beckons pre-teens to have their first fumbling nightclub feel. Apple. Always Apple. And horses? Land Securities commissioned: something big, shiny, unrelated, sure that's totally fine: think spectacle, the wow-factor. Dean talks gates. The church gate is special, ornate, marked out. Criss-cross commuters. 'Scuse-me.' 'Sorry!' One big foot. Marble. To sit on. 'And what about the dog benches', says Fi. 'You know the ones by Smiths?' Map check. Where are we? Mill Hill Chapel. All faiths welcome. Cold blast. Full rain. Pink fingers clasping umbrellas or defiantly pushed into pockets.

City Square. Traffic roar. Morn and Even atop their plinths. The city's fathers and the Black Prince. To the owls, can you see them? Silhouettes through early evening darkness. There's one! And another. Is that one? No it's a vent. Fi has to go. Passing the Black Prince to leave. Stuck to his base: Frozen's Hans. Fitting. Metal balls set deep deny the grinders. The square's one final flourish: Conway and Young's *Colliding at the Corner* and its thrilling invitation: 'Imagine the Loop Road is Closed.

Close your Eyes and Breathe Through Your Nostrils'. The Adelphi beckons via Boar Lane, through persistent precipitation. Cross Leeds Bridge. Where it all started. Louis Le Prince through that window. 1888. Well before the Lumiere Bros. All his fault. Into lit Victoriana-cum-Hipster retreat. Open fire. Yes! Warmth works and unfolds us into velvet benches. We've lost Carmelia. 'Any drinks guys?' 'Menu, love?' Fitchy works his charm. Now the jam jars come out. The mystery solved. Make a snow globe. A tourist kitschitty that covers in glass something prized. Capture in your jar something you noticed about Leeds, that you want more of, or less of. Something you saw you hadn't seen before. Elevate the mundane, prize the debris. Lego, glitter, glue, lolly sticks, pipe cleaners. Industrious creativity ensues. **Urban Constellators turn their eye to the overlooked:** a perch for pigeons; the oldest church and the tree lights; commuters, clubbers, shoppers; the layers of Leeds' past just metres below its shiny surface; security guards, skeletons and spectacles:

*the multiplicities of the city.*



READING SURFACES,  
 DEMYTHOLOGISING THE CITY,  
 TURNING THE SPACE 'AGAINST THE GRAIN'  
 MAPS ARE IMAGES, REPRESENTATIONS,  
 PICTURES, POWER. THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF  
 THE LAND; THE RATIONAL INSTRUMENT OF  
 SPATIAL ORDER AND CONTROL. TAKE A MAP, ANY  
 MAP. TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, THE TOURIST MAP  
 OF LEEDS. WHAT DOES IT WANT US TO KNOW  
 ABOUT THE CITY? WHAT STORY DOES THIS MAP  
 SEEK TO TELL? WHAT, FOR EXAMPLE, IS AT THE  
 CENTRE OF THE MAP OF LEEDS, WHERE DOES  
 THE MAP WISH TO DIRECT OUR GAZE? HOW  
 DOES IT TELL US WHAT IT WANTS OF US?



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 ZOË THOMPSON'S BOOK **URBAN CONSTELLATIONS** IS AVAILABLE FROM  
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SCOPOPHILIC PLEASURES. ELEGANT SLOPP

ES GUIDES US ONTO BRIGGATE. BRIDGE GATE. STREET TO THE BRIDGE. 5.10PM. FRIDAY. CROSS CUTTING THE VERTICAL CROWD





DISTURBING BOURGEOIS COMPLACENCY: ONE HEART AT A TIME. BUSES. HEAVIER RAIN. SUITS EN MASSE,



## CONSTELLATIONS CONVERSATIONS PARTICIPATIONS

I'VE NEVER BEEN DOWN HERE BEFORE! NOT LIKELY TO AGAIN EITHER. WHITE TRANSIT VAN - HAS TO BE FULL OF DEAD BODIES. WHO COMES TO THIS CAFÉ? YOU'D NEVER SEE IT. MUST BE A FRONT.

WHAT'S WITH THE FEET? IS THAT SIGNIFICANT? NOT EVEN A SHOE SHOP IS IT. IS IT A MAP?

A TIGHT SQUEEZE IN THE SHOPPING CENTRE FADES PINK YELLOW GREEN BLUE. WHY HIGHLIGHT THIS AREA? BRUTALIST BUILDINGS.

A WEREWOLF LANDS HEAVILY ON THE ROOF, A POOL OF BLOOD OZZES INTO A CEILING. THAT WOULD FREAK ME OUT, TOTALLY.

WALKING, TALKING. IT'S BEEN SHOWN TO COMBAT DEPRESSION. JOINT WALKING'S GREAT - WE FOCUS ON DIFFERENT THINGS, SEE THE FAMILIAR IN NEW WAYS.

WE STOP AND LOOK UP AT A TREE. HOW OLD IS IT? HOW DO YOU TELL? WHO CAN DO TREES? WHY IS THIS TREE, HERE?

ZOË PROMISES LEEDS IS FULL OF ANIMALS, ASK CHILDREN TO FIND THEM AND THEY'LL SPOT THEM EVERYWHERE. I CAN'T SEE ANY. AT THE TOWN HALL WE COUNT OWLS - ONE, TWO, THREE. NOW THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.

WHERE IS CARMELIA? LOST OR LEFT? SOME PEOPLE FELL OFF THE ROUTE BEFORE IT BEGAN - APOLOGIES, REGRETS, EXCUSES. AT THE LIBRARY WE NEARLY DOUBLE OUR NUMBERS IMMEDIATELY WHEN AN INTERESTED PARTY LATCHES ON. JOIN US! THERE ARE 16 OF US. OH - JOIN US? WE'LL KEEP IN TOUCH. OTHERS FALL OFF ALONG THE WAY OR JOIN PART WAY THROUGH. COUNTING THEM OUT, NOT COUNTING THEM ALL BACK IN AGAIN.

FORMATIONS, MUTATIONS, URBAN CONSTELLATIONS, CONVERSATIONS.

LOUIS LE PRINCE'S BRIDGE, AND ...

THE ADELPHI - MAGICAL! REAL FIRE, AND A DOOR! 'LYNNE AND FRIENDS' - IT'S RIGHT, BY THIS STAGE. LOVELY STAFF, GREAT FOOD, WARM WARM WARM. LEGO! AND THEY BROUGHT JAM JARS! DOGS IN THE MUSEUM. MATT AND ME SWAP DOG PHOTOS. NO DOGS ON THE STREETS BUT THEY'RE IN OUR PHONES, IN OUR HOMES, IN OURSELVES. NO PIGEONS!

vignettes

reflect in format



proof

Zings we like

chance encounters

Next Equality

what reveals

on the wall of a room

Mobile Phones

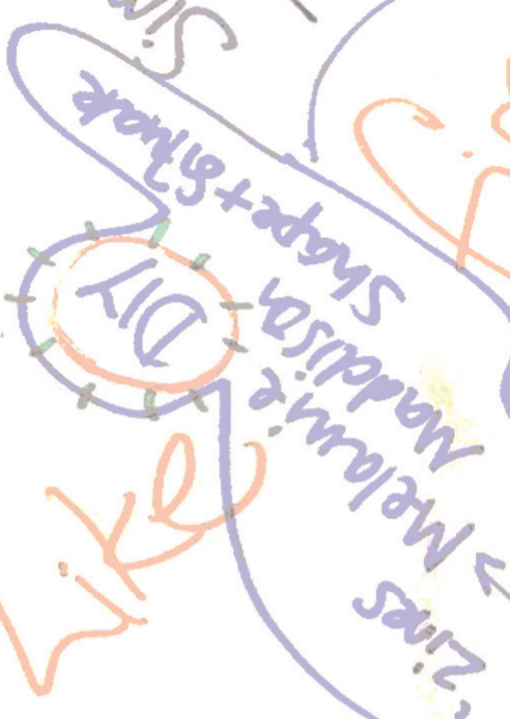
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marginal paragon  
Omnipotent  
faint →  
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William Andersén

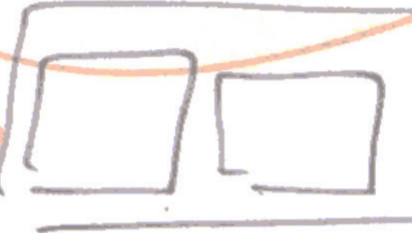
cl. shapes

Simon  
Shape + Stroke  
Simon  
Shapiro  
Co



Fire

Days  
Ricky Wilson



confidants

flirt

30



**Urban Constellating** took place on 13 February 2015 in Leeds, West Yorkshire. It was one of a series of events hosted by the Media and Place research cluster at Leeds Beckett University. The text was written by Zoë Thompson and Lynne Hibberd.

Thanks to everyone who took part.

A photograph of a person wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, holding a map of Leeds. A large, semi-transparent red letter 'L' is drawn on the map, tracing a path through the city's streets. The background is dark, and the map is brightly lit, showing various colors like blue for water and yellow for buildings. The text is overlaid on the image in a yellow, sans-serif font.

MAPS CAN BE A BIT OVERBEARING YOU SEE. AS YOU CAN TELL FROM LEEDS,  
IT'S A LOT OF PRESSURE TO BE THE 'OFFICIAL VERSION' OF SOMEWHERE.  
BUT WHAT IF WE DON'T WANT TO LISTEN TO THAT STORY? WHAT IF WE  
WANT TO FIND A DIFFERENT THREAD  
THROUGH? LET'S BORROW SOME  
TECHNIQUES, LET'S SHAKE  
THINGS UP A BIT. WHAT'S  
YOUR NAME? WHAT'S YOUR  
FAVOURITE LETTER IN YOUR  
NAME? TAKE A PEN, AND TAKE YOUR  
MAP. DRAW YOUR FAVOURITE LETTER  
ACROSS ITS CENTRE. WALK THAT LETTER.  
STAY AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE CONTOURS  
OF THAT LETTER. SEE WHAT YOU NOTICE, HEAR, SMELL,  
TASTE. WHAT YOU HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE, STREETS,  
BACKSTREETS, GINNELS, CUT-THROUGHS, LANES YOU'VE NEVER HAD CAUSE TO  
GO DOWN, SOUNDS, OVERHEARD CONVERSATIONS. LOOK UP, LOOK DOWN BUT  
FOLLOW YOUR LETTER. YOUR LETTER. YOUR NAME. AND RECORD, REMEMBER,  
MIS-REMEMBER, EVERYTHING. THEN TELL THE STORY. YOUR STORY OF YOUR  
CITY. YOUR TOWN. YOUR VILLAGE. YOUR PLACE.