

This poem won the Yorkshire prize in the Yorkshire Poetry Competition

Voice, cry, call

Imagine if they invaded Leeds in March,
made The Headrow their cliff face,
cemented nests on every ledge –
how you'd never hear yourself speak
above their din, truckloads of sound
emptied out on every corner.

Crackled bicker of shriek –
kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake -
every car alarm in the multi-storey
triggered, echoing the concrete floors
while the flocks scrawl KITTTS RULE
in guano on every wall and lift door.

You'd soon become desperate for August
when the thousands would take off,
cross the ring road and cooling towers,
head off over the Wolds to the coast,
fly over a lad in a wetsuit who teeters
on a ledge at Flamborough Head.

They'd head out to the North Sea,
beat off the slap of rough storm.
They'd scrape their un-rosined bows
across the growl and snarl of waves
while we cleaned the stink from the city
and learned to talk human again.