

Peckham cherries

London sprawl face-presses on early train windows.
Wet clay tongue drooling down the glass. Leering
at the first wave of a new day's work migrations.
By ten, carriages are empty, but services keep coming.

Clanking to the centre from the south. Elevated
above the suburbs, they shudder past city body parts;
revealing stretchmarks, wrinkles, scars and cracks.
Block by block – house, then flat, then corner shop.

Some boarded, waiting to be levelled. Wincing in the glare
of constant reinvention, as impatient new-builds sneak up
on stranded pubs. Elsewhere, sullen silver boxes loom over
once proud spires. The architectural weight of history

piling in, on land that once was wood, or glade and meadow.
Sloping down towards the Thames. Old Smoke's bones
reduced to rumour. Preserved in ink on crinkled maps,
stashed in the bottom drawers of local libraries. Except on days

when green still rises. As on one March morning, just past
Queen's Road, Peckham. When two lines of cherry trees slipped
through tarmac, blossom rounded, like pink speech bubbles
emerging from the mouths of stick-thin drunks.

Crying out against the stark of city living. Bursting up, from under
brick and steel and concrete: a defiant shriek of spring.