What happens?

A city walk imaginatively joins a present-day speaker to an industrial ancestor.

The main idea

Looking beyond the limits of working life allows a descendant to recognise both an ancestor’s aspiration and a continuing connection.

1. “dreams”

Method: Metaphorical elevation

Hope is imagined as something placed beyond polluted everyday surroundings.

2. “dust”

Method: Sensory detail

Work enters the body, making industrial conditions materially present.

3. “echo”

Method: Auditory image

The descendant’s steps seem to answer an earlier life.

4. “arcs”

Method: Geometric verb

The final movement connects generations through a line that exceeds either individual.

Form and structure

Free verse moves between a historical third-person account and a first-person present, ending in an imagined shared perspective.

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Development, voice and tone

Ancestor’s surroundings — Constrained but aspiring. Crowded housing and dangerous conditions give urgency to the desire for a broader horizon.

Walk after work — Imaginatively released. Looking at striking architecture briefly exceeds the narrowness of repetitive labour.

Descendant’s walk — Connected and expansive. The two periods meet in a vision that extends beyond a single lifetime.

Context

The poem locates family history in Leeds’s industrial buildings, including textile mills and the River Aire.

Comparison links

In a London Drawingroom: industrial restriction. Homing: heritage recovered in the present.

Recall question

How does the movement between times alter the meaning of the view?