

Toast

- by Sheenagh Pugh -

When I'm old, I'll say the summer
they built the stadium. And I won't mean
the council. I'll be hugging the memory
of how, open to sun and the judgement
of passing eyes, young builders lay
golden and melting on hot pavements,
the toast of Cardiff. Each blessed lunchtime
Westgate Street, St. John's, the Hayes
were lined with fit bodies; forget
the jokes, these jeans were fuzz stretched tight
over unripe peaches. Sex objects,
and happily up for it. When women
sauntered by, whistling, they'd bask
in warm smiles, browning slowly, loving
the light. Sometimes they'd clock men
looking them over. It made no odds;
they never got mad; it was too heady
being young and fancied and in the sun.
They're gone now, all we have left of them
this vast concrete-and-glass mother-ship
that seems to have landed awkwardly
in our midst. And Westgate's dark

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with November rain, but different, as if
the stones retain heat, secret impressions

of shoulder-blades, shallow cups,
as sand would do. The grey façade

of the empty auction house, three storeys
of boarded windows, doesn't look sad,

more like it's closed its eyes, breathing in
the smell of sweat, sunblock, confidence.