

## April 2016 winning poem

### 'Sink': a cesspool; a receptacle for filth or ordure.

Pebble-dash is not a long-term cure for poverty.

Who would have thought it?

It does not pile into the mouths of the unemployed,

The disabled, the zero-hours contractee,

And choke their dreams of

A better life.

It almost buries and blurs

The blemishes given to it by a polluted sky,

The egg stains given to it by an angry taxpayer,

The judgements handed out by drivers, passing time.

When I was a kid, Council workers came

And caked my estate (like so many others)

In that slurry of stones. Pebble-

Dashed poverty.

Re-packaged and clean;

Nothing to see here.

No slowly peeling building made of tiny tin rooms

Meant for temporary post-war gloom, now sliding

Slowly one inch a month on concrete cancer.

No plug sockets dangling, suspended from the walls.

No disintegrating plasterboard, hidden by

The lumpy graciousness of woodchip.

No dimly flickering yellow lights just bright enough to  
See but not enough to bleed the meter dry.

They smoothed plaster across the  
Surfaces, flattening our flaws.  
We were getting a make-over.  
Free of charge.  
We should have been happy.

They came with buckets of the stuff,  
Feeding the walls as if they were hungry pigs  
-Our houses nothing but troughs-  
Splattering, sloshing, pelting and pitching it -  
Scattering stony seeds against our history.

But only blindness grew.  
Bulldoze them. They are sink estates now,  
Those ugly towers and prefabs Thatcher tried  
So hard to quash the first time round with  
The right to buy your misery  
As the only way to beat it.

Bulldoze them. Relocate the ...  
families Occupants.  
What does it matter if it's somebody's home?  
Somebody's mother's home?  
Somebody's childhood?

A place where Christmases happen,  
With or without a loan,  
Where children's birthdays are marked  
By singing, smiles, embarrassing  
Stories, just like any other.

What does it matter that there is nowhere else  
For them to go; 1.9 Million already waiting for a home,  
House prices six times any wage they'll ever know,  
Let's continue to force the sick  
And unemployed into an empty void of  
Unaccountable landlords until one day,  
They just decompose

While no one is  
Looking.

And  
Slip  
Down the  
Drains at the sides  
Of the roads  
In droves,  
No  
One to  
Hear the

Moans or

Sobs,

The

Last

Of

All

They

Have

To

Call

Their

own.

**By Zoe Maggs**

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