What Oldham Holds

Keeran Sahiba

Before we learn fear, we learn breath.

Before we learn division, we learn warmth.

In Oldham Hospital, our first cries echo the same corridors,

where names are written in careful ink,

and no one pauses to translate skin.

This town was built by hands that carried more than one homeland,

hands roughened by mills, by shifts, by hope,

hands that folded prayers into lunch tins

and dreams into wages.

Oldham remembers everything.

The soot. The strikes.

The silence after factories closed. The way families stayed anyway.

We grow up side by side

learning early that difference lives next door, sits beside us in assembly,

shares our playground bruises, our packed lunches, our first losses.

When we bleed, it is never divided.

Red does not choose.

Pain speaks one language.

So does kindness.

Some try to tell us belonging must be earned, that home has conditions,

but Oldham knows better. It holds us in its streets and stories,

proof that identity is not fragile, and that a town survives not by being the same,

but by refusing to let anyone be erased.

KAUR RISING

Jasleen Kandhari

She stands in saffron light—
a silhouette stitched
from every woman
who refused to fold.

Her braids are battle-lines,
not of war,

but of memory—
threads carrying the weight
of mothers who crossed oceans
with only faith as luggage.

The kara bangle at her wrist
glints like a horizon,
a circle unbroken
by borders or doubt.

Her scarf is a whisper
of all the names
she was told to shorten,
soften,
translate.

But she wears them whole
now—
each syllable a shield,
each vowel a vow.

And when she lifts her face
to the wind,
the world finally sees
what she has always known:

Kaur
was never just a name.
It was a destiny.

The British Working Class is a Colony

James Lawton

The British working class is a colony
surviving under Elitist rule. Occupied
by landowners and aristocracy,
sent to grey, urban prisons. Locked inside.

Lords of the Land divided and conquered,
enclosed and bulldozed us all from the soil.
Centuries later, mortgage-manacled,
dunce-capped by the price of gas and oil,

every Tom, Dick and Harry thinks they're free,
while the rich count their hectares and pounds.
From old River Thames to cold North Sea,
We stand, work-weary, on stolen ground.

We all saw the blood-stained maps in school;
Africa, India and the New World
all felt the wrath of Britannia's rule.
Now our eyes must open like flags unfurled:

working class Britain's been colonised too,
robbed and raped by its own landed gent;
we've more in common with the victim who
fights back than the toff who doubles our rent.