

Newcastle: A Love Letter to a Segregated City

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Newcastle upon Tyne, your iconic bridges extend over the Tyne in a display of strong, metallic arches, standing as monuments to your industrial prowess. You were once the northern heart where coal and creativity burnt equally bright. You were a city that marched proudly at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution, a beacon of progress and unity. Your streets, lined with neoclassical grandeur, spoke of a collective spirit that seemed as permanent as the stone from which you were carved. Yet, as I wander through your [changing urban landscape](#), my heart aches to see the cradle of such industry and artistry in a silent struggle. The once-thriving shipyards have quietened, the hum of factories and mines replaced by the transient buzz of student life, the fleeting energy that ebbs with the academic calendar. You've become a city of landlords and short-term leases, where the faces of residents grow

ever more unfamiliar. Your communities, once interwoven, now exist in pockets— islands of identities, amidst a sea of indifference. The students, international and local, move in their currents, often detached from the city's historical narratives. The Toon's proud past is revered, but it's not always reflected in the actions of today.

In pockets, you are segregated, not just by the visible boundaries of roads and railways, but by the invisible lines of socioeconomic divides. In the West End, stories abound of a time when there was solidarity in the struggle. Now, the struggle seems to have bred a silence, a resignation to the status quo. The fabric of what once made you whole- the Geordie camaraderie- appears frayed, as if the community threads have unravelled, leaving behind a tapestry of disjointed experiences. And in the midst of this, the [refugees](#); those who have fled unspeakable horrors only to be greeted by your cold, grey sky and an even [colder shoulder of bureaucracy](#). They wait in limbo on your outskirts, in accommodations at the edges of the city that are often as temporary as their peace of mind. They are the ghosts of your present, living in the shadow of a society that is yet to fully embrace them, their hearts heavy with the weight of their past and the uncertainty of their future.



Newcastle, my dear, melancholic city, your heart still beats, but it is a rhythm out of sync with the needs of all your people. The scarring of your landscapes, the vandalism not as acts of mindless destruction but as the desperate cries for help — a youth disenchanting. The fallen [Robin Hood Tree](#), the arson that claimed many more, stand as testament to the restless spirits of your youth. They are not acts of malice, but a poignant message from those who feel unheard, seeking solace, seeking a sign that their city hears them too. I write this not to dwell in despair but to stir the embers of hope that I know still glow beneath. For I have seen sparks of change, glimmers of the just city you can still become. There are those among us who strive for your revival, who work tirelessly to weave a new narrative, one that honours your legacy while paving a path towards inclusivity and justice.



To live up to the name of a [just city](#), we must not only celebrate our storied past but also actively shape a future where every community finds its place in your story. A future where students are not transient occupants but custodians of your culture. A future where refugees find not just refuge but a home within your embrace. We must remember that a city, no matter its monuments and marketplaces, is only as robust as the lives that unfold within it. Each act of vandalism, each scar on your surface, calls us to listen, to engage, to mend not just the broken windows but the broken spirits that lie behind them.

I pen this letter not in a whimsical nostalgia but as a call to action. Let's not be content with merely renting out your history or selling postcard snapshots of bygone glory. Instead, let us be the architects of a new era, one where every soul in Newcastle contributes to and benefits from the just city it deserves to be.

Links:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/07/brave-new-world-newcastle-dream-for-vertical-city>
2. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/8/7/212>
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-63544950>
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66967101>
5. <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/whoweare/files/From-Newcastle-For-Social-Justice.pdf>

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