

The new term

By Stockport, he needs his first pee.
My eyes flick to the poorly hidden glances,
to the gawping fascination of a child
as our Mum drags him backwards up the aisle,
her fists protrude his armpits.
His rigid calipered legs,
orthopaedic heels plough the British Rail carpet,
the twin grooves spoil the pile.
No-one offers to help.

My teenage shame and heat
pulse and fuse with the train's mantra

Cerebral Palsy, Cerebral Palsy...

Both seated again,
Mum scowling and sweaty.
Abruptly, he remembers the journey's end,
the new school term,
and without warning, slides
into a routine grief, issues his noisy bawl.
A dozen eyes snap on,
then off again,
find sudden interest through the grime
in the bleak, Cheshire landscape

Cerebral Palsy, Cerebral Palsy...

A woman, kind and anxious,
offers sweets,
he yells his refusal, then emerges suddenly,
covered in snot, a big saliva grin.
Mopped dry now, bright eyes fixed on the paper bag,
he tries his new voice on the woman,
hard Salford vowels
now lengthened and softened
by the weight of his time in the South.

" They're not mints are they?"
Relief makes us laugh ourselves silly

Kathy Watson