

Durham Miners' Gala, 1991

Peter J. King

Out on the racecourse, patch of green
beside the Wear, the bands are
brassy but wind-torn,
forlornly catching at the past.
The fairground rides and fast food kiosks,
pamphlet-fluttering book stalls and
the bandsmen's uniforms, all scattered
out beneath a grey sky heavy
as an iron perm,
oppressive as the ceiling
of the deepest seam.

Then into the cathedral, where
the bright brave banners
bunch against the cold
of Norman stone; grey columns –
massive, permanent – surround them,
graceless and uncomfortable.

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