



Steven Hitchins

Palisade Winters

2011

Night. Pulverised car. A vast fugacious galley.
Remote epoch travel to this place. Shallowherb.
Billowherb. Morrain bubbles stiffen. I shoal algal
till.

The Colonel gazes at the vista of twisting sheets
marginal lakes karstic fissures locality bones
mammal rivers and railway lines. Pitheads
marked by huge wheels of alluvium. Coniferous
palm-like islands of winding gear.

I look up between steep brick
at narrow navy swirled with jackdaw.
Sidealley sacks & wheelie bin
by black metal steps. Sirens.
Blue hoodie & girl run
arms linked under faulty streetlight.
PIZZA red in a green circle
OPEN red in a blue circle
Taped-up window Beauty Hair
Iceland Co-op Mr Kipling Brace's Bread
Gregg's corned beef chicken bake
Boot's window tower Nivea Dove
Saver's toilet rolls Velvet Plenty
Superdrug Lucozade fridges
B&M Bargains basket stacked dark
Podge's Tattoos signboard on pavement
tinny R&B down open staircase

Different colour cotton hood gangs
drink Pepsi outside Pizza Land,
sit on the tinfoil arches outside Patriot's,
talk on the corner by the traffic lights;
Adidas and three-feather jackets
smoke on bench by the taxi pool;
zombie screech: 'Alright or what?'

White again, it's white high
gloss now, but tatty. Don't
know what they want it for.

But as I say. I can't stick. There's
no telling her mun. I'll do like
my sisters do. Said I'll take that
as a compliment, Kayl. When
you coming home Sunday or
Monday. Sunday I am counting
on but it depends. Stime?

Steight. Haven't had nothing off
her. They're so different. Oh
she've past her test have she.

She turned around and said.

And uh she said. I said you
know at the end of the day
like. No you want to say.

Old man in black suit trousers
and jacket with t-shirt underneath,
Puma beanie white Dunlops
huffing along Wood Road.
Wheel trim in front yard chippings.
Tipp-Ex on meter box:
Jason G is gay.
The Yellow Pages sweats in polythene.

Coral alpine drifting. A very loamy peneplain
hinterland. Dashing riverish. I clutch the drowsy
hum of thistles.

Turning up the collar on his vitrain porosity, the
Colonel strides back to the car. His voice melts
away. Bubbles stiffen viscous mist. Crush solvent
into the babble of sounds.

As you can see, our town is a currency of colloids
and silts. Infrared arable tundra. Scrub
punctuated by the noise of the epoch. Ironstone
mangroves. Cellular tropics.

Gaslight came to bootlace the gusting of the ash.
Places like market approaches illuminated by
ripening bog marsh. Subtropical naphtha flares.
An occasional oil street lepidodendron.

snow-deep tracks
clumps sit on mesh of dry bramble
brakes wheeze
whistle slowly sunkenly
deflating balloon
nose a numb presence on my face
any more fares any more tickets
an irish voice
woolly webbing
a shatter of branches jags into blue
blackwirelines blackwirelines
a pylon revolves as we pass under
headphone drums
frost-powdered pond stubble
black leaves curl up in footprints
pull off hat and scruff up hair
fold a paperback out of the satchel
black and white cheetah-print
gravel and snow
“went on a rage last night”

slush rink

gloved fingers pat plastic buttons

glassy ridges last week's footsteps

superimposed walks

blue with white streaks

navy-thick cloud

powder fog figures

troop through field

patterned casts of trainer-soles

the defrosting city

yellowlit offices rise from the melt

chins tucked into collars

As soon as the furnace tissues slurry, we've closed
the doors and the driver ignites the combustion
mineral.

These tombs negotiate the harrows. Altitude
shallow around cloaked strata. Fossil people
crescent symbol. Before even my own grimy flora
fragments. Hanging solar allegories on the erosion
strata.

Emerges into evening light,
rubs eyes, spits,
brings fag to lips.

Hyena squawks,
hugging Stella box,
bouncing off grannies.

Well, I can stack shelves. No I
agree mind. Like I said to her I
said. Look I said I love these
boots right. What is it now
March? Just the fucking.

Red Reebok fleece woman
walks sausage dog, waves
to passing ambulance,
ASDA carrier bunched in fist.
Clap of heels, rustle of bags,
jackdaw chirp-quack,

cyclist cranking pedals,
bleep of ATM pelican crossing,
woman screeching, Oiiiiiii.

I tread the green tarmac bay
up the yellow letters

BYSIAU

SAFLE

STOP

BUS

Nitrogen spherical I clutch the door handle,
perched on the edge of opaque lattice. Acid
vapours. Sulphuric swells cauliflowering. Hydro
liquefaction in the rear bench seat.

Twisting shales stiffen viscous sands. Pine grit.
Soles chalk in rhythmic cycles. The boil lakes.
Chainwort blattice. Spleenworks.

I glance in the mirror as fireclay lakes lagoons
foliage swamp anticline islets raft. The drastic
habitats. Soils of the wind. Rain bitter
winterglacial till.

Trams huddled from soaking ankerite boil. Shawls
shiverised. Shoppers ride in a skeleton jelly.
Boneshaker bicycles through the demolished
arcade. Porcelain bubbles through the stone-tile
froth.

resculpting hat-hair
binbag-seethru-plastic ripples
litter-weight sways
dormant sneeze spikes my nostril
then dissipates
bergs of buildings
breath crystallises a granite cloud
as it leaves the mouth
the frost-shocked streets
watch the shadow of the train roll
across the concrete walls
sunlight squares of windows
the shadow plops off the edge of
one block onto another
a glowing white aeroplane
one millimetre long
floats motionless above
two pigeons ruffed into
grey bowling balls on platform
blue shadows of my hand on the

orange-lit page

peck at belly and claw behind ear

pink grit crystals scattered at

platform edge

cold eats under my coat and hugs

around my ribs

luminous troops carry clipboards

uptrack

grey clouds ride sandbanked sky

sunpuddled yellow

the train chatters its teeth

a bell blinks in a terrace window

He studies the windswept summits ribboned with sprawling sands of morrain drift. Microgranite belts. Postglacial till and solar pastures. Woolly puddles of slag.

Your men will be more than welcome to use the larger climate lagoons oolite shoals algal tufts faulted calcium millstone system. Easy walking distance of the pyrite dust portions.

So. I did say to him. I was
thinking. Only a little. Like
that. Glass door. And um. And
that was two hundred and fifty
quid. Every time at least once a
week. Tra. I got Houdens. And
then five years ago. What I said
to Colin I said I haven't done
bad. Every weekend. Twenty
years ago. I don't mind them.
So I said this one now. Out the
back. Oh there you are well you
have it then. She said christ.
Coin of sun, white and far,
hazes glass; dusts out grubby
skin-tracks, splats and streaks;
slants stripes from signposts.

We wait in the whirring,
glowing up and fading
embolden and soften diagonals.

The hoods shuffle in,
hoods within hoods.

Trailing energy drink vapours,
sticky glucose fog.

Any loamy sound, even my own voice, is preferable to a silence peninsula. A geological moment, a single time-plane on the road that winds the hilltop over the coalfield.

The Colonel squirms under the foot of twisting vegetation. The Corporal turns the military staff car in rhythmic cycles. Blattoid in front of the Cottage Hospital. Stop the car.