

The Mancunian Way

Uncaring blossoms shamble to verve, under
 a sky of vapourised trails. Air tanks outside
 sheer buildings, thickens in the empty snap,
 then echoes the cold. First, BRITAIN
 PAUSED FOR VIRUS SURGE plotted
 online alongside THE BEST PLACE TO
 SEE PUFFINS: good job you took a screen
 beforehand. Now ink your critical faculties,
 as three mattresses slab these awnings.
 What is more important? The pigeon that
 doodles its under-hang paste, or this
 unpulsing noon, the gig-seller downing on
 his luck? Idiot ideolects banned January
 katsu: now we are sharing, whilst queueing,
 for absent pasta. Tea heads head by, locked
 in winter cosies: plug your ears to your
 pockets; line your head with foxes, where
 the road swerves like a penguin enclosure.
 A *gwyn* car slides flightless white. Early
 walk to avoid: your globs cling to the dawn.
 Your leopards are skinning my lockdown.
 A pelican crosses its own path. Crow:
 building statics engineered to come. Way
 more humpback than this fire carving
 centres. Easy slump where the tents used to
 pike: if you could still respond quickly, I
 would be very grapefruit! Standing under
 columns, in a column of poetry, you sting,
 clearly. Today, there are yet more giraffes,
 and, as usual, relentless Oasis. We could be
 curved under this Way, a swimming bath or
 ski chute: the zone ends with a sign and
 deletes the city. Above, you are unzoned.
 Compound bikes—concrete blocks brazen
 their soars, and scars, SARS: these are crags
 soaked to the Palaeolithic. A rusted light
 crusts a drop cable as urban anemone;
 sound dampens here, and curves to Hatch.
 Hive off the beer strippers. Dalton, an
 outsized hovercraft, inflates its bricks. Bees
 care for the roof product. Your pram glide
 mimics the sway fence: so lovely in
 epaulettes. A hood passes with diamond
 noodles. What an angle! I am phoning
 myself, just to be sure. Pennines are ribbing
 an escape, to home. Not home. This present.

The Pork Raisers

The pork-raisers rented the terraces' courts,
hulled the offal heaps and pools for feed
where swine fattened on our putrefaction
into sounders farced with buttering sage.
'Most injurious to cleanliness is a cabbage,
a multitude of *pidges* chuffling the ginnel,
walking the snickets, rooting our quarters:
they *gronten as peegs*, not Shelley's *biggs*,
bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs',
complains Salford Engels, stuck in a hul,
'and who larded and laddered a porker up
to grease a procession for that swimmer,
Webb?' Domesticated even-toed ungulate,
aad-varking the ground like an earth pig,
Herr Engels was littered from a *scrofa*, his
stout body bristling with his sparse hair.
You pigged your way through our slums,
notebook in your trotter, holding your pen,
your broad nose flattened like a peg.
'Omnivorous as *pygges* suckling troughs,
the raisers hoard the tenants' sties: box-
corners form a temperance delight: unlike
human sots, pigs do not sup at night.' You
take the wrong pig by the ear, root us Mancs
like a bush, rear a book on our conditions
for chapmen into print, the habits of prole,
glanx, *glandis*, *picbread*. Now you are
marooned in a statue, daubed with the mud
of Ukrainian paint: their yellow and blue
farrow you hairless in their pig-cote of time.

Coils evaporate the Medlock into chips:
 cylinders freeze and revolve the factory
 with an auger, pushing the batches up;
 water balances across vertical plates that
 break into crush. Liquid ammonia
 maintains gletschers with its latent vapour:
 stocked like fish, ice overnight is as silent
 as its blue, tensed to clots of pops furring
 their lines on freezer backs, vanilla pods
 squeezed into cream sunbeams, Netto
 Cornettos or Ko Ko Mo. Arctic junkies
 brick the freeze room, staring into tundra, a
 Siberian dream where Piccadilly sinks into
 the liquid air, its clammy dawns banished
 into the below snows of Novosibirsk. Kids
 licked their milk of skulls, Haunted House
 printed with fruity spit, traces of ghoul if
 wrappers glued to the gravestone block, or
 the upended butter spab of a Coola Bar,
 Jelly Genie, Kilimanjaro and Screwball
 with its brutal marble of sunken gum.
 Gerardo Scappaticci, Carlo Tiani: Italians
 iced Ancoats with the crystalline hexagons.
 Wet as a Lambretta, the factory now melts
 into road: cold as turbines on Dogger rise,
 new motors fridge the trade. Muck alps and
 unhinged diggers clamp the river. Geese
 flutter an amnesty like clubbers' drugs.
 Curated rubble ledges the current where
 pipe spaghetti pollinates surrounding dock.

The Bingley Ripper

Trees across the valley moss their burning,
ink their reds and copper in an ashlar sky.
Our family's haul to Shipley Glen: boulders
like Easter statues roped from the glaciers
streaming from Elterwater or Great Gable,
dropped a throw from the Ferncliffe estate
and fairground smells ghosted with slot,
tarpaulins as sighs gutted in the autumn.
Dodge a hat and suck to your parting gob.
Walser a magnet for scrawl, itinerant cows,
parched beeches planing the rocks' edge,
smaller boulders hiding the thumbed gum
and fish paper greased transparent. They
always stood for something else: fumbles in
the cut, assignations on a cliff as dangerous
as a spangled Durex. Across the ivy valley,
NF brushed in a Dulux scrawl; LEEDS or
BRADFORD whitening the lower divisions
across the hopeless Aire. Lined with beams,
we nosed across a ridge, hit the Ilkley turn
where sound punctured the valley air.
Pocked cracks. An impossible green
dipping to beck and then following stone.
Silent—then a shotgun as admonishment.
Even the flags are quiet on Baildon's heath
in the pub's warning of its own cross. Kecks
are sanded on the wind-down to Salts: chin
past the unseasonal yet hanging lights
where our chips are straight to a mill, coat
drystone snow. A woodpecker grins its lice.

Bingley mosses. You feign gormless.
Gaskell: Brontës were sullen as glen peat,
friendly as a glacier, self-sufficient,
churlish, loving and laughing at nothing;
kind as stones no intervening could gauge.
Excommunicated villages magnet to pawn.
You climb eggs to flappitt Baildon and
ridge of Dick Turpin for a breathing pint:
the Aire valley airs its annual bull show.
Regional certainties: crocked bark for Plot;
cracked molars on the dunked parkin pigs.
Hoard your silence unless you harbour airs:
Sutcliffe benefits from custom, iron wills
chained to the past like mild, a raised choir
at night with the Sauceworks' lush Abide.
Canals barge cuts: Five Rise Locks stands
as gibbet over the culvert. Brazen as a view,
the cargo of commuter slickers, moaning.
Concrete bunkers offend with civic graffiti;
undercutting chimneys divide their stubs,
airing their circles. Bingley cobble warrens
empty to a river and game throttles.
Sutcliffe tries to follow in outcrop steps,
grandad's out-plates of mutton offal
elbowed from kitchens: your mum ladles
chicklins and tripe that stretches your guts.
Reet: parting the cow heels sucked to trot.
Cheek. Your dad screamed when his chin lit
with the boiling gravy. Fireballs chipped
the heights, drystone snows to light our kid.

[**Antony Rowland** has published three poetry collections: *The Land of Green Ginger* (Salt, 2008), *I Am a Magenta Stick* (Salt, 2012) - which was described by Peter Riley in *The Fortnightly Review* as 'an original and thoughtful handling of a major European modernist mode' - and *M* (Arc, 2017). He was awarded the Manchester Poetry Prize in 2012, and his poems were included in the anthology *Identity Parade: New British and Irish Poets* (Bloodaxe, 2010). He received an Eric Gregory Award from the Society of Authors in 2000, and recorded for the national Poetry Archive in 2009, and the Lyrikline (Berlin) in 2014. The Dutch government elected him as a UK poetry 'ambassador' for 2016: his poetry was read on national television, and shown on screens at Schipol airport and Amsterdam Central Station.]

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