

Halls of Residence.

In between the cold grey walls which rest

In between the green, auburn, pretty fields,

Amongst the clear waters rich in salmon and trout

In which centuries of men and boys have poached

Amongst the lands owned by the lying sinners of divinity:

Like old Boswell, the 15th century Mason

Who fled the fertile land due to accusations

Of sorcery and witchcraft and

Whose house still stands today

Away from the rich Lugar Water

Old, thin bridges – heroin and violence

And that house welcomes those from all over the world today

In land where money and pain and uncertainty are plentiful and interchangeable

Near the caves where Wallace hid

Along the tracks where Bruce marched,

Near the lodge where Burns learnt the ancient rites

Of the famous Masonry

Such contradiction, o' Caledonia

Where the Romans failed to reach,

Yet opiate compounds always found their way and always will

In land in which ironies bubble and fizz

All in good, melancholy, self-deprecating humour

Where rich, black oil was replaced by brown, sickly-sweet heroin

In land where money is plenty yet so is pain

In the world which could do so much for us

And at this end of the enlightenment,

Where one can find oneself laying upon plastic mattresses,

In hostels – writhing, writhing, with stomach gnawing and empty

Screaming at the organic host: *give me my poison!*

And thus flows the rancid, coppery sweat

Down the halls are sunken, pin-head pupils and

Faces drawn out by heroin and methadone

Endless sunken-faces upon endless sunken-faces

Pinched and worn but hardened, stiff by cold and greed

9/4 odds at bookies –

Cash, super-lager and sweet street Valium –

Glassy eyes stare gormless in the streets and ageing women with arsehole mouths wheeze

With thanks to 40-a-day menthol cigarette habitation

God of Caledonia, bless the Saltire, but to whom do we ask to be saved?

Who will save me? Ask souls in confused-unity

A poor brother was locked-out and shouted his drunken prayers:

‘God’s gonnae kill aw a’ yis!’

“Yir aw bad people!”

‘Am gonnae pray tae God, and he’s gonnae kill aw a’ yis!’

And on and on it went like that:

And out the back of the hostel, the damned stood smoking away the nervous paranoia,

One of which took out something sharp and familiar to the land:

He sliced his wrists, for he dreaded what the next day was to bring.

Blood flowed – flowed and trickled, briefly warm down the white, thin winter arm,

In the cold, crisp air, which murdered the red cells in its harsh, honest brutality

It dried and became crusty as nurses rushed down for aid.

They rushed to put a stop to death's slow and painful embrace and to keep the sinister, absurd
dance in motion

The blood warmed us all briefly –

The tragedy warmed us all

Let us drink our super-lager and wretch to the spectacle of self-sacrifice

Before the lucidity of the night's terrors keep us awake, wondering and worrying about
unclear truths

All Sam could think was who would save him?

At this side of the enlightenment,

Of all of its false-promises and the resultant fear and poverty,

Who would save me?

Scotia-

Beautiful glacial ancient hills:

Where cold, fresh water flowed, became ice and thenceforth formed the beautiful rock-formations
which are the awe of countless spectators

Where Picts and Vikings once bathed

Near were shepherds herded

Near the beautiful heather,

Cursed by Gypsies

Caledonia!

Who will save us?

I want Alex Salmond to comb my hair and Nicola Sturgeon to stroke my beard

It wasn't meant to be like this.

It wasn't meant to be like this at all.

- Upon us,

The weight of the hard world lies.

Not the whole world,

But the large parts that made men crack and crumble.

Weary is the blood in our veins,

Once as vicious as the stormy Lugar Water,

The very fear of light can rest in one's soul,

And, alone, many of us endure

like wildcats

Olie Martin – Kilmanock - 2021