

Hector of County Durham

The girl climbs the steep hill,
up past the Dun Cow, the corner shop,
the graveyard, abandoned Mad Annie's place.
Up to the party house on the top of the hill,
views over the Wear Valley.

She perches awkward in the hall.
In the front room, a boy, Hector
plays a video game, ignores her
trigger hand on the joystick.

Later, he'll impress her,
mouthing every word,
to Black Sabbath, Paranoid.
And showing, how he is fearless,
but never quick to draw the knife.

A group of boys in the kitchen,
necking snakebite, fight over
the dogend of a cigarette.
They size her up, throw her
into the bedroom, locking the door.

Hector finishes the video game,
satisfied he is still top of the leaderboard.
Makes his way up the stairs,
scattering the boy queue like ten pins
in the bowling alley.

Later our hero walks the girl home,
under a blood moon.
The milk float goes from house to house,
bottles clinking on white-bleached steps,
as the starlings, peck holes in the silver tops.