

ANDREW JAMISON

The Bus to Belfast

An unstubbed cigarette butt, I can picture it now,
will be smouldering at the door of Toal's.
Between the Mace and the Carman's Inn opposite
the chapel I'll lean on the lamppost bus stop.
The Ulsterbus will slink down the hill
into Crossgar on the first Thursday after Christmas.
The hydraulic door will huff open. I'll step in.

The tenner I tender will elicit an epic tut
from the part-time bodybuilder driver;
raising the plucked eyebrows on his sunbed seared mug.
There'll be a hair gel smudge on the window by my seat.
The pane's black rubber seal will be nicked to bits
by a compass. The backs of seats will be plastered
in permanent pen signatures, initialled hearts,

and patches singed by cigarette lighters
and chewing gum and misspelt taunts in Tippex.
December sky will dazzle Carryduff. A flash of sun
will flare first then flicker for a while through my eyes
as we hurtle past *Pizza Hut*, *Winemark* then the *Spar*.
We'll shuffle by Forestside. Nothing will have changed.
That house over the graveyard will still be up for sale.