

*Hitcher* – Simon Armitage

I'd been tired, under  
the weather, but the ansaphone kept screaming:  
*One more sick-note, mister, and you're finished. Fired.*  
I thumbed a lift to where the car was parked.  
A Vauxhall Astra. It was hired.

I picked him up in Leeds.  
He was following the sun from west to east  
with just a toothbrush and the good earth for a bed. The truth,  
he said, was blowin' in the wind,  
or round the next bend.

I let him have it  
on the top road out of Harrogate - once  
with the head, then six times with the krooklok  
in the face - and didn't even swerve.  
I dropped it into third

and leant across  
to let him out, and saw him in the mirror  
bouncing off the kerb, then disappearing down the verge.  
We were the same age, give or take a week.  
He'd said he liked the breeze

to run its fingers  
through his hair. It was twelve noon.  
The outlook for the day was moderate to fair.  
Stitch that, I remember thinking,