

By Simon Armitage

It begins as a house, an end terrace
in this case
but it will not stop there. Soon it is
an avenue
which cambers arrogantly past the Mechanics' Institute,
turns left
at the main road without even looking
and quickly it is
a town with all four major clearing banks,
a daily paper
and a football team pushing for promotion.

On it goes, oblivious of the Planning Acts,
the green belts,
and before we know it it is out of our hands:
city, nation,
hemisphere, universe, hammering out in all directions
until suddenly,
mercifully, it is drawn aside through the eye
of a black hole
and bulleted into a neighbouring galaxy, emerging
smaller and smoother
than a billiard ball but weighing more than Saturn.

People stop me in the street, badger me
in the check-out queue
and ask "What is this, this that is so small
and so very smooth
but whose mass is greater than the ringed planet?"
It's just words
I assure them. But they will not have it.

Simon Armitage, "Zoom!" from *Zoom!*. Copyright © 1987 by Simon Armitage. Reprinted by permission of Bloodaxe Books Ltd.

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