

'Bike'

Michael W Thomas

July 1969. For Mike Evans, 1953-2014

We stood smack in the middle of summer,
felt the minutes, hours, days flow down our skin.
A crazy bunch of miles above, some man
was set to trampoline about the moon
and get himself misheard by history.
The sun was our manor. We swung our bikes
along its beams, its paths and cut-throughs, out
across the molten ways of housing schemes,
where peace begged for a chance from open doors
and windows sang of pinball wizardry.
No freedom for the man up on the moon,
no change of gear or bush-grassed gulley. He
was parked before the world, a black-white moth
netted with one wing twitching. We roared on.
He jumped stiff-legged, a toddler testing beds.
We slicked our tyres with ancient oil. He coped
as best he could with ice-white silence, left
a flag to be unloved by July breeze.

Did we feel autumn in our bones as we
rode home, hear time complaining at the snow?
Course not: we'd been bowling over fire,
chasing sun-spots like rooks. Our transmissions
were simple as a breath, joy to muscle
to speed to joy to muscle—the right stuff.
Meanwhile, beyond the day, the moon man tried
to get back up a ladder as unsound
as those our dads ascended, bulb in hand,
mithering of expense and foreign tat,
while far below our mothers gripped the rungs
and tuned their minds' dial elsewhere, to their times
of joy, of speed and fire, endless sun.

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