

Colin Schnollin

Sifting through time, the archaeologist of self
discovers memories and events,
pressed between layered sediments of the mind
like dried flowers.

Starting at ceiling height
I brush time's accretions from a living room
and there I sit, down below, with my parents and my sister,
around the dining table, finishing a meal.
I am seventeen years old.

From behind the Ilford Recorder, my father tells me,
It's high time you brought home a nice young lady.
My sister whispers, Jane Cellophane fancies you.
My mother overhears and says the Cellophanes are vulgar.
I mumble through rhubarb crumble and custard,
I'm going out on my bike.

I follow the narrow track of tread thought time,
over Whalebone Lane crossroads and on through Romford,
out to Gallows Corner roundabout
and then, wheels bumping over black bitumen strips,
along the concrete Arterial road
to the cyclists' mecca, the Green Tiles Cafe.

Harry shouts from behind the counter,
Come on you buggers, who's pedalling for charity?
Tanner a go, dosh in the bottle,
first prize double egg, chips and beans.

The whiskey bottle is perched on the pianola
and we take turns pedalling God Save the Queen
for a laugh.

The machine wheezes, flat out,
it's perforated paper roll racing past,
keys clattering up and down as if on their own.

Tricky from Billericay works the stopwatch
and Schnollin, that's Colin with the speech impediment,
pedals like a pervert and wins.
We all cheer and sit around him as he eats his prize,
helping ourselves to his chips,
dipping them in the runny egg yolks.

Fugg skin bar turds, yells Schnollin

But we buy him another double egg, chips and beans
and lemonade with a barber's pole straw
and he grins like a winner.