

Motorcycle on my mind

Ian C Smith

The ghost of my young self dwells a boy's bike ride from a city friend's new townhouse. When she leaves for work I pat pockets, lock her door, set out on foot. Passing the old swimming pool things gone but not forgotten float to the surface. I know I shall head for the high goods rail trestle bridge, its slow trains rickety echoes, a punishing review of the past.

My newspaper delivery grid, musty archives of my mind zinging. A black dog, hackles alert, snarled through a closed gate here at scratch of day inches from my bare legs each time I stopped. The house looks different, as do many, but street names evoke the oh so long ago. Around the corner lived a boy who became a writer of mesmeric Australian landscape fiction. I shall walk this locale for years today, aching.

Disoriented, memory no longer shatterproof, I rest near a sculpted driveway of coloured concrete, trying to reconfigure the past on this landscape. Realisation erupts, raising the veil of progress to reveal the heady odour of hard-scrabble before these updated houses, this permed parkland, changed the view from scruffy to confusing. My girlfriend lived so close I am almost there. Her single mother fed me home-made cake, ruffled my hair.

With schoolmates I pedalled to the bridge glimpsed in the distance, spectral, unused now, hauled to its height bald tyres dumped below, let them go as if dropping boiling pitch from a castle's ramparts to plummet through a golden morning, swishing howls those of wild raiders scalded, delighting us before they bounced, dandelion fluff dancing on air, each bound quicker, less pronounced.

To impress that girlfriend I borrowed her big brother's Norton 500cc, a machine like Che Guevara rode, hot hands clasping my chest, breasts pressed against my back, blazing into a stun of wind towards the city that looms closer now, a dreamscape then. Because she was three years older than me I strained to appear cool, but was barely shaving. Eventually her womanly appetites scared me off, our break-up pathetic, another cliché of careless youth, into time's drift, the tunnel of my story where I thought I had left her behind.

Author Bio

Ian C Smith writes in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria, and on Flinders Island. His work has appeared in *Antipodes*, *cordite*, *Eureka Street*, *Griffith Review*, *Journal of Working Class Studies*, *Meniscus*, *Shaping the Fractured Self* (UWAP), & So Fi Zine. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra Press.