

m^ccauley writers atlas



2014

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FOREWORD

The humble bicycle, with its many lovers, seemed a natural topic to inspire writers and artists exploring the intersection between health, environment, art and urban living. The second edition of McCauley Writers Atlas (MWA2) features many fantastic submissions, from comics and photography, to poetry and stories, creating an homage to the versatile velocipede—our dearly beloved two wheeled friends.

Aside from the ample literary expression of inner city bike culture, it is evident all around Edmonton that there is a growing appreciation for bicycles. Being a cyclist in a city so centred on the automobile demands a resilient temperament—strength in the face of adversity. Sharing the road turns the streets into what sometimes feels like a battleground. Still, there is a growing movement. It's our hope the MWA2 will showcase the joys of biking and move our friends, families and colleagues to join a critical mass of cyclists, taking part in the daily life on our city streets.

David Prodan
Summer 2014



Paulina Van Vliet



High Level Bridge by Paula E Kirman

Wild and Free

Nothing in life can compare to the simple pleasures of a bike ride.

With the abundance of specialized gear, every day I spend on the road feels like Halloween.

The gloves, the shoes and the jerseys, so colourful and bright.

Dressed up each time we leave the front gate. Neon signs, zipping by. The pre-dawn ride, the pride. Feeling the burn, the speed, and the gentle curves. The hills awakening the strength within.

The clarity that comes from winds whizzing by. The stabilizing power it creates, in life and in the next bend.

The aggression and anger that fuel the pedals ... The feeling of being wild and free

Aymie Highfield-Comins



Open Eyes by Doa Ocampo Alvarez

Of Learning To Ride And Dads

Bikes appeared on Elphinstone Street behind the English-style row house that U-ed around the short end of the block — a working-class intrusion into a middle class area of old Regina. We were one of the dozen or so families that called a small, two-up-two-down flat in that long building home.

It had been built so long ago the trolley bus turn-around across the street was no longer used, the overhead wires torn down as the city had grown suburbs far past that point of return. We didn't know our residence's full name 'til it was razed in 1964: Henderson Terrace, said the caption below the photo in the Leader Post — its demise made news in a small way. We still, as we always have, call it the Terrace. Or home. More memories than this of two-wheelers have ever since been resident in imagination though the physical space they lived in has ever since been among the fresh produce of a small supermarket.

Bikes.

They just showed up one day.

Childhood essence of independence.

Only I didn't really know that then. That that's what had happened: the coming of the machine bestowing, through partnership with spinning legs, the gift of independent movement. The way to get out on your own.

Three machines. Unexpected, unannounced, leaning against the big back porch Dad and Uncle Johnny built for muddy boots and a place for Mum to rest a laundry basket and stand high enough to reach the line, Mondays.

I don't remember much about the bikes; I could have been ten years old the summer they showed up. There weren't really any kid's bikes back then, at least not among these hand-me-downs and not among our friends' rides. Dad and Mum didn't earn enough to buy us new ones so they were in the condition they were in and who knew from a tuned bike in those days and at that age.

Dad doing his best to give us a childhood he never had. An action that had to speak for the words he couldn't say, the words his dad never blessed him with.

Three bikes. I think. Memory's hazy, looking back through the

wrong end of the telescope. Two I don't remember much. One of them, probably, could have been the one I learned to balance, pedal, move forward, turn, coaster brake on.

The memorable machine of the trio was a huge, brown step-through. Old, at least post if not pre-W.W. II. The rust dark colour vintage CCMs patina to. Tall. Vast. Looming over us, the saddle at least at my shoulders.

Maybe Dad had to take this one to get the others. Some buddy from work, the Army reserve, the Union, the church cleaning out a garage. Passing on outgrown bikes.

Maybe that big one was for Brenda?

That must have not made sense, even back then. None of us fit that bike and my sister never would. And never took to bike riding. But I wouldn't blame Dad for the bikes he probably got for free. He did his best. I know that bike scared me, and if it did Brenda as well I totally understand.

It was obvious no one would ever ride that set of monkey bars. Impossible. Too heavy, too.

It was a step-through but the long swoop of the top tube didn't descend very low, leaving a large space above the bottom bracket. We were all too small and our imaginations didn't extend to the number of years it would take to grow that tall. No set of wood blocks attached to the pedals would make them tall enough to bring them close to our feet.

And anyways — it was a girls bike.

Halfway 'round the row houses, on the long side of the building on 5th Avenue, lived a family somewhat more wild and untamed than us. They were ok, we didn't know them, didn't get into stone-throwing fights like with the Woodley brothers when they first moved in, before Bobby and I became best friends.

I can't remember this guy's name but he was about our age and definitely more of a street kid than us. There was an energy of freedom and sass about him. Enough smarts to not get into trouble. . . or at least not get caught. His family may not have lived long in the Terrace, there was a lot of come-and-go. And. Maybe we were too goody-goody for him. No sense of risk or adventure.

It was a warm summer night of long sunset and long twilight with resonant glories of sky that only happen in Saskatchewan when he walked across the open yard shared by every back door around the building. I was standing a couple of doors off, so I saw the whole thing. He'd obviously had his eye on those bikes — it was a pre-bike lock era but none got perma-borrowed from us. He asked if he could take the brown behemoth for a spin.

He was only a little taller than us in stature. But way taller in independence.

No one said no to him so he stood it up, rolled it away from the back porch.

What's he think he's gonna do? No one our size can ride that thing!

He points the bike out into the open, packed-dirt area among parked cars, broken glass, weeds, and the garbage and ash bins we'd play Red Light/Green Light from, later when it was darker. He stands to the left side of the bike, lifts the rear wheel, reaches down, spins the cranks so the right pedal is up. He puts the wheel back on the ground and sticks his right leg through the gap formed by the down tube, seat tube, and top tube.

What's he think he's—it's impossible to ride that piece of...

He puts his right foot on the right pedal, kicks off with his left in the same moment

and

floats easily across the big back yard that opens on the gravel alley, our home playground.

I don't remember him coming back. He's still riding off. I see him now, white t-shirt half tucked in, right, faded jeans leg stuffed in his sock.

The bike leans right, he leans left, his body but for his right leg completely on the left side of the bike, his butt at least a foot below the saddle, arms reaching up to the handle bars, steering smooth lines with ease, his body rising and falling above the cranks, the bike swaying from side to side.

Lookit him go.

He sure showed us.

A lot.

He didn't teach me how to ride. I don't remember who taught that. I think it was a council of kids from around the building. My older brother Tim. I remember feeling oh, he's riding, so it's my turn, I should do that, I'm expected to. So it got done. Little did I know where it would take me.

I'm pretty sure it wasn't Dad who taught me to ride. Or: I don't remember if he had a hand in it. I'd get embarrassed around him. He became a teacher later in life, but back then, it wasn't his style. He didn't have that dadability because of the way his father mistreated him. Dad would bring stuff home, ball glove, books, bikes and then we'd have to pick up on it by ourselves. Because his dad didn't teach him anything except how to know when to hide and if he couldn't do that, how to hold the pain and bruises inside.

I found out what that means one morning standing in a hallway, the exact same kind we had in our flat, watching Bobby Woodley's dad terrorize him with a belt for losing a jacket. Bobby cowering on the floor, never turning away, watching for where the blows would come from, his dad towering above. And then not knowing how to emotionally salve Bobby's embarrassment and fear later that I'd borne witness to his humiliation through violence. His mum stood and watched, arms folded across her chest in judgment. Older brother Larry stood beside me, unmoving. Safe. For now.

We walked to school in silence. Got there before the bell.

I don't remember Bobby and Larry having bicycles.

I had a bike.

Is it sad?, that I don't remember how Bobby and I parted. We moved away after Grade 6, when the building was busted up.

That was childhood gone. Off to the suburbs. A new start. With a bicycle I can't really remember learning how to ride.

So I learned to ride how we all do. With falls and aching balls. I remember some of the wrecks, but what I remember clearest is that kid soaring away on the brown behemoth. He taught me

there's a way. By showing us the end result. That awful piece of bike or Life that's been handed you's in your way? There's a way. You can find it.

And, from this distance, in his final absence, I perceive Dad taught that, too, as best he could. What the grandfather I never knew taught him by beating him Dad taught us by. . . leaving us be. Taking care of us, housing, clothing, feeding. Embracing us? That may have been too hard. Maybe it would release all the pain and longing for fatherly love beaten into him.

Dad changed his life. He and I graduated from High School the same year. He went to the technical school in Saskatoon to see about getting a teaching certificate and they gave him a job teaching.

You put it together yourself. You can change the biggest thing in your life, re-deal the cards you were handed.

Dad taught himself not to be violent to his children like his Dad was. A huge step. Thank you Dad.

There's a Way.

And that's the Way to be. To be moving forward.

Dad brings an impractical bike home. The best he could do. Can't learn to ride a bike without a bike. But. . . be intimate with his children? How could he give what he never got.

Sometimes. . . the Way gets away.

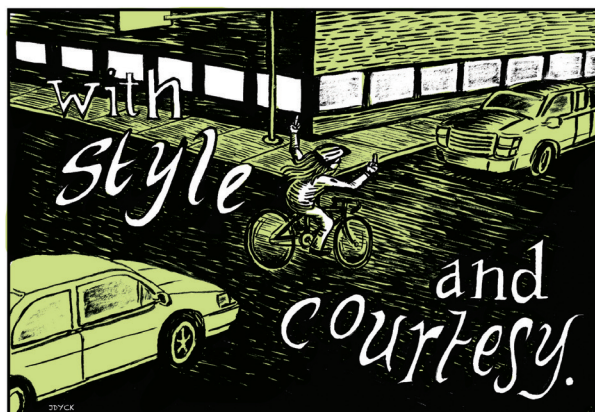
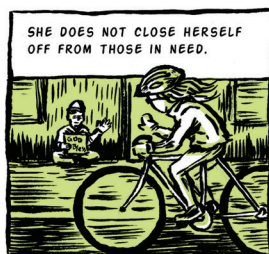
But Dad did all he could. There were the bikes, even the one we couldn't fathom riding. Some Way's better than no Way.

Had that neighbour boy ever ridden a bike like that like that before? Was it practiced or did we witness a discovery in the moment?

Either way it would be amazing, memorable at this distance of decades.

I've never ridden a bike like he rode that one, side style.

R. Clinton



Jonathan Dyck

WHAT REMAINS



skeletons of bikes left in alleys, on bike paths and along sidewalks.

a chain. pedals. a wheel. a frame.

is it wasteful to gut a bicycle for a part or two?

or is it a testament to the importance of a bike?

perhaps it shouldn't be deemed senseless or random vandalism but instead, an act of desperate resourcefulness.

Sarah Hoyles

A History with Bikes

Earliest memory of riding is sitting in a child's seat on the back of my fathers' bicycle. Along with my older brother and sister, as a weekend summer tradition we'd all ride to the corner store and get Slurpies.

My mother was the one that helped get me to ride my first 2-wheeler at age seven. We practiced in our giant backyard each summer night until I unsteadily made my own departure and was triumphant.

I broke my wrists on my bike when I was 11 years old. I was riding, looking behind me, and then remembered hitting a parked car. This accident occurred in the distance of four houses from my home, which all in all made a pretty lame story to tell at school.

My first bike stolen happened at a Save-On-Foods parking lot in Suburbia, at 10AM in the morning. I was using a coil lock. I blame bored teenagers who, I suppose, shop at grocery stores on Saturday mornings.

My second bike stolen was in the parkade of Vancouver's General Hospital, using a coil lock.

My third bike stolen was 2 weeks later, exact same spot and again I had used a coil bike lock. At this point I started connecting the dots that coil locks just don't (DO) cut it.

I found a bike in my then forest of a backyard so I fixed it up at a community bike shop in Vancouver and swore that I'd never use anything but a u-lock from then on.

A couple months later, while crossing a major intersection on said fixed up bike, looking forward, a car side swiped me. Bike remained intact, not my shoulder, although a much more thrilling story. Bike hiatus for a year.

Which brings us to last year, in which I became a proud owner of a Linus bicycle equipped with a front child seat for my daughter, our summer time tradition being a ride to the Italian Centre.

Jacqueline Ohm





Photos by Paula E Kirman



Psychedelic Cyclist by Josh Byer

Untitled

On my grandparent's farm the barn was on a hill. The cows were housed underground and could walk outside through gates on the back side of the barn. Up the hill was the ground floor where the hay was stored, and it was one of the most wonderful playgrounds of my life – we had a trapeze! Building forts out of bales of hay was fun, and a bit dangerous, but my cousins were bigger and older and they protected us. It was also at the top of the barn hill that I learned to ride my cousin's bike.

My cousins Mary Lu and Nancy helped me onto the bike and cautioned me on how to use the brakes as I rolled down the hill with them running on either side. It did not take long to learn how to ride the bike, and the old adage is true, one never forgets!

On my youngest sister's fifth birthday, the 13th of September, 1954 my parents presented all three of us with bicycles. This was eight days prior to my middle sister's eighth birthday and sixteen days prior to my ninth birthday. That bicycle was the beginning of freedom, knowledge of the unknown, exercise and, did I mention, freedom? It represented to my nine year old self what my automobile represents to me today – freedom and independence.

It was sixty years ago this September and I can still see the street, the house, my mom's and dad's faces as they stood there, with big smiles, holding our bikes. My dad passed away this year – and I have been having a lot of these memories come to me.

As I write this piece I am reminded that I have macular degeneration and know that any day my sight may leave me unable to drive, or ride a bicycle. I am grateful for every day I have with sight and, most especially, for the memory etched in my brain of the sight of my first bicycle!

Colleen Chapman

Fixing Your Own Bike

I prepped in every way I knew how whilst planning for THE trip from Victoria British Columbia to St. John's Newfoundland: first aid courses, self defense courses, CanBike cycling courses and of course, bike maintenance courses. I was determined to be as ready as I could ever be.

My bike maintenance guru was Tim Nolte who has gone I don't know where. I see him around town occasionally, I think he's at United Cycle now, but he was with Edmonton Cycle, right next to A&W on Whyte. Not sure what's there now, certainly not bikes, maybe vacuum cleaners

Pumped up with this shiny knowledge I ventured out and made it all the way to Winfield before an untrue wheel and an incoming violent prairie lightning storm sent me posthaste to the only accommodation in town.

I showed up at 4, thereabouts, on a Friday. Just before the storm showed up. You could tell we were both welcome. A girl and her bike, and the storm that ushered us there. The hotel was a hotel by virtue of having beds upstairs, but the likelihood of these rooms having been used in the last decade, perhaps in the last century was slim to none. Most, if not all, of their trade was garnered from the bar - that hallowed tradition of all small towns on Friday nights. The bar keep/hotelier was readying the establishment for a night of potential debauchery and country music. I was a harbinger of oddness. Fortunately I hadn't yet shaved my head, but I didn't really fit in, regardless. Not much call for lycra bike shorts and power bars on the ranch or in that bar.

I got a room upstairs. I dragged my bike up the stairs willy-nilly as bike parking was also scarce. My room was near the men's washroom which itself was down the hall from the women's washroom. This point is important, as segregation of the sexes was still a real thing in rural Alberta, at least in the matter of washrooms. It didn't really matter, the proprietor told me, as the woman's was out of commission. What did I care? I was alone on the 2nd floor. I had cycled across British Columbia and much of Alberta alone, so using the men's facilities didn't faze me. And the lure of a shower was strong.

Ensnconced in my room, I prepared for my foray in the shower and, although I don't remember why, I took out my contacts before

getting in to the cubicle. This choice made me feel better when I eventually looked down and I, who am one degree away from getting a seeing-eye dog, could SEE the mold that lined the tub where it joined the wall. This was quite distressing, and I made every effort to not touch anything I didn't need to touch. I'm not sure it was due to it's being the men's washroom or just the general condition of the whole hotel, but I felt it was an ominous portent... just saying...

By now you may be wondering where the bike fixing comes in... still your heart, here it comes... I finished my ablutions, crawled into bed and dozed for a few hours. The rain came down hard, but it did nothing to stop my rest; after all, I was clean, and warm and dry.

At 12 a.m. I was wakened by loud, loud music. The storm had done nothing to quell the night's festivities and the room I had been given was right over the bar. I could have gone down to join the merriment, but cautious of my reception and with a lack of any confidence in the lock on my room door, I chose instead to true my pesky wheel. Not an optimal time I know, but what else do you do to Cotton-Eyed Joe in a foreign town when you're alone and not inclined for company?

Possibly it was the tunes, possibly it was the time, possibly it was the lack of Zen like concentration, but I did not do Tim proud. Turn, spin, next spoke, turn, spin, next spoke, spin again, then again, the slight rub barely discernible over the music. My attempts got more and more frantic, with less and less progress, until I abandoned the wheel around 2 a.m. having taken my wheel from slightly untrue to completely so. At this point, I also hit upon the ingenious plan of leaving early to make my way to Edmonton for professional help. So, I brought my wheel back approximately to where it had been, returned to the niche made in my bed where the springs were broken, and listened to the bar noise wind down before falling off to sleep.

At 7 a.m. I gathered all my gear, taking it and my bike down the stairs in two trips. My intent was to perform this same feat to get it out the door. I grabbed my bike and wheeled it out the door, only to think too late that I should prop the door open, rather than let it slam resoundingly shut behind me, stranding me and the

bike outside, leaving all my panniers securely locked inside.

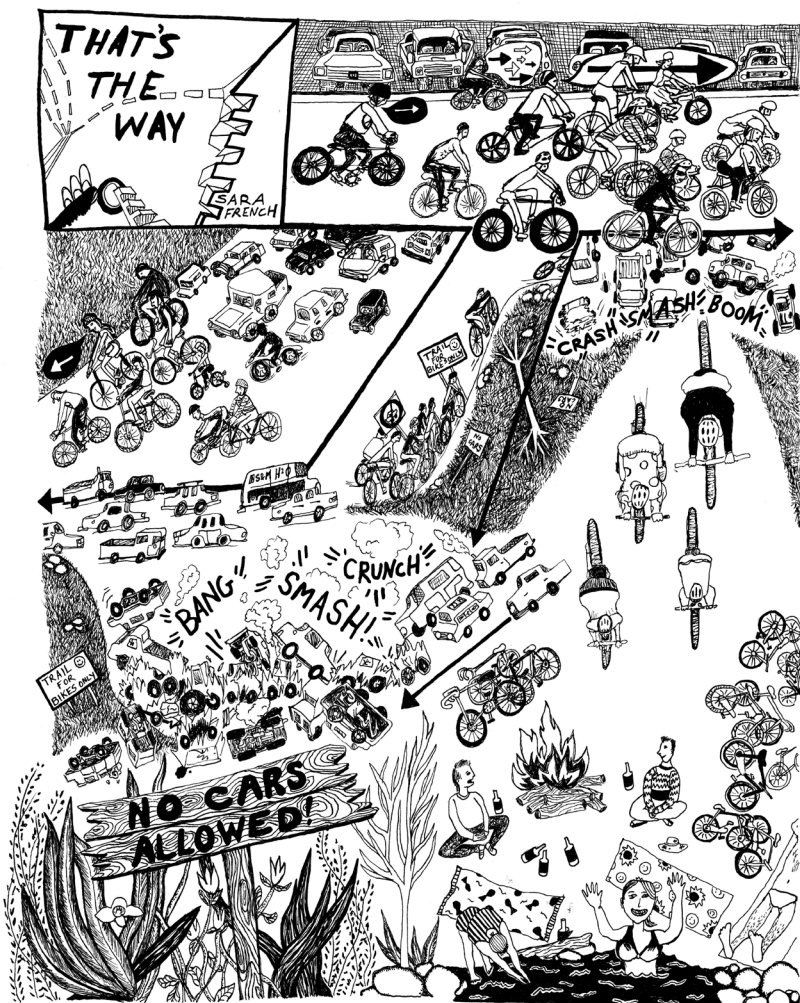
Curiously, this was somewhat reassuring, as I now believed my rest would not have been disturbed in any manner the previous night, given this locked door. I have to admit, 7 a.m. seemed as desolate as 2 a.m., really. I gave my bike a spin, confirmed that my 2 a.m. ministrations did nothing to aid my adventure, and when it started to rain again, I settled down to wait under the eaves, congratulating myself for providentially bringing my sweater out with my bike.

Turns out, this wee town did not get up early, contrary to my expectations and my occasional, vigorous efforts banging on the door to rouse any other occupants. All I managed to drum up was a dog, equally bedraggled as I was, with the painful addition of porcupine quills in her nose. Frankly, given the dog's condition, I felt marginally better. I was eventually reunited with my gear, when the folks from the hardware store across the street came by and advised the way to enter the hotel – if I was locked out in the future, I was to bang on a CERTAIN part of the door, after which the lock would pop open. Had I but redirected my efforts...

Ultimately, the dog got her quills out on a table in the hotel kitchen, I ate breakfast at a different restaurant based on that latter fact, and then I called a friend of mine to come get me as my will to ride the last few hours to Edmonton dwindled whilst standing in the rain with the dog. I and the resultant heap of crap into which my wheel was transformed had to wait for rescue, like a princess of a less feminist fairy-tale, until after a CanBike Course my rescuer was giving. It gave me a day for a thorough investigation of not a one-horse town, but a town where pregnant mare urine is collected, presumably from more than one horse, for creating birth control pills.

That was my one and only attempt at truing wheels.

Karly Coleman



Sara French

Postscript: Of Learning to Ride and Dads

This past winter I had a chance to work on a men's CCM bike, serial number dated 1946.

It was that rusted-out brown colour. The rims had clearer remnants of dun maroon, maybe once a burgundy enamel surviving in some spots, very crusty rusty in others on, of course, the rear wheel. Hand painted cream pin stripes on the rims and fenders. You can see where the worker re-dipped the brush. Imagine a day spent doing that, hand painting thin, thin stripes.

Everything was Imperial, long pre metric. Different size axle nuts on front and back. Lock nuts for the cones? Nope. Cones held in place by the axle nuts and fender struts. Yikes.

A certain simple crudeness to some of the lugs, probably some pre-W.W.II. parts, maybe a bike built by women before men returned to their tools after laying down guns in Europe.

Rusted chrome polished with 000 grade steel wool and lube. But there's naught to do when the chrome's pitted down to steel. Nothing lasts forever.

I searched all through her — a huge struggle to get the seat post out — put in new bearings and grease in the front wheel and head set. One-piece crank, so had to use the same bearings and cages. They looked ok enough. Used a tube of bright red Campangolo grease some guy'd donated. High class meets working class.

The old-fashioned sealed hub in the rear wheel was working good. Keith Hallgren topped up its oil. He showed me how to spray rust sealant down inside the frame.

The wheels need re-spoking but we decided to let the prospective buyer decide to do that [and, about that time, an older gentleman clearing out his garage after decades of bike repair handed in all his unused, original boxes of old CCM and Raleigh spokes — including the right size ones for that bike — brand new 60 year-old spokes!].

With re-built wheels it could roll for decades.

Tricked it out with a vintage-looking modern bell and reflectors front and rear. Made 'er street legal. The saddle she came in with

was still good to go, black leather-ish, a period look.

A test ride showed the coaster brake was more of a speed attenuator. Don't go fast so you don't have to brake fast. But she was solid, willing to roll at her own pace.

She was peaceful making.

It sold on a shift when I wasn't at the shop so I didn't meet who bought it — and we were asking \$120.00 for it.

A goodly number of people were so fond of it they took it for a spin 'round the parking lot, glowed and told us memories of their dad.

It's entirely impractical for anything other than a roll around the neighbourhood. You could commute on her if you lived and worked in flat parts of town. A pootle in the river valley if you're prepared to walk it back uphill.

But it's so nice.

Working on that bike was this close to being with that bike Dad brought home to us. A closeness to Dad. Too late to be real, but some things don't last forever.

So I know what made up that bike that landed in his lap. Know more about its workings than he did.

I imagined it was the bike in the mid 1930s Dad was given by the corner grocer to be the delivery boy for the neighbourhood. He'd passed Grade 8 and took the option of legally quitting school to go out into the world and earn money for the family. It's what the eldest son does in the Dirty Thirties. In a heart-broken family. But. Every school day, at least once a day, he arranged his delivery schedule to walk Mum either to or home from school. I imagine she sat in the large front rack delivery boys've always had. They'd first set eyes on each other when they were 13. She passed away in his arms.

It began with a bike.

The bike kept them in touch. Gave them time to build. And, I must believe, make promises. To build a better life than they were given.

As they did for us.

R. Clinton



Fletcher Gailey-Snell

Sunny Afternoon Excursion

Riding along
wind in my hair
hot sun overhead
no clouds to hide its golden richness

First gear and cruising
pedaling to the beat of insects buzzing
and birds chirping
mile after mile

Legs pumping
mouth wide open
sucking in all the available oxygen
and too enthralled by the sight of nature
to concern myself with exhaustion

My glossy red vehicle contrasting
with the urban greenery
up out of the river valley
and finishing my ride
too soon
at my inner city apartment building

George Sarantis

Biking: Then and Now

Then, on my bicycle I sped faster than cars
Curved down winding hills
Through empty fields
On gravel paths I fell
Skinned my knees
Rocks stuck in open wounds
Battle scars that I survived

Freedom was on a bike
Some rode slow
I flew

Now, I pay to ride a stationary bike
Where I can't fly
Where I won't have battle scars
From skinning my knees falling on gravel paths
Where I can't explore open fields
And I can't speed faster than cars

All I can do is pedal and pedal and pedal
Moving without movement

Alouise Dittric



Burano Bike by Rasma Hadiri

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