

George Venn

Riding Out

Cycling wheels roll easy down the black road this afternoon.
Your legs rise and fall. Spokes gleam. May sun obscures
itself behind some clouds, then appears in gold again.
Vast grass mountains, high pine forests rise before you now.
Endless green. Your chain turns. Magpies row across the wind,
hawks pray the sky. One squirrel holds last year's black walnut
in her teeth—bitter shell, sweet core. On her post, she watches you.

May wind is gently fair. Beside Bond Road, ten grazing mares—
foals at every side. You see new lives trembling along—all legs—
their mothers' teats never far away. Further on, the black bull—
huge in his corral—waits for hay from hands he knows by smell.
A mile up the hill, a red heifer—white horned, serene—turns to stare
as you ascend the afternoon. In a far field, one old ponderosa
stands alone—left in the middle of that green plain to signify
the way the world portends. Your heart's drum beats louder now
the uphill ride tests everything you are. Flowering crabs flare
crimson in a yard. Dwarf delicious flower by the pond. Huge
haystacks—sere in their austere squares—cast geometric doubts
across the road as you pass through their shadow land. You're
rolling uphill now—going as far as you can—to wherever this road
ends. Green meadows bloom with goddesses who lave and dazzle

stones, gods melting to the sea as you ascend, sprockets gleaming
in the shifting afternoon, your eyes your arms already
flying through the pines. "Come to us, come now," the green trees say
with open limbs. "Come. Let go of all desire. Life is grief and
pain. You understand. So let go, let this valley go. We are waiting
here for you. Be one of us again. Eternity is now—mysterious
and whole—and you are cycling toward us again today. Stay on
this road. You will rise, curve, disappear—singing—into fog"