

That Cyclist

He stood out
riding a bike too low
for his height, knees
cycling above his waist,
the ring of keys
looped from jeans
bounced on, rattled off his quad.
His unzipped windbreaker filled with air
making him a mini blimp
for his favourite team,
as he hogged the lane,
set the pace ahead of a bus,
with thoughts of switching left,
opting against,
unable to shoulder check
on his cell,
one-handing handlebars,
turning right instead,
without braking.

I stood out
on the curb, static
as street furniture,
and forgot to follow
the lit stick figure to cross,
as this cyclist curved close,
I searched his wind-chilled face,
eyes a chase dragged me to ask:
pursuer, pursued or speeding
for his own sake.
I stared long enough
to become an object of interest
back, his cocked head and look,
as he pedalled on, mocked
how could I just stand there.

That Teen

Lips pucker up. It's the weight
of his face pivoting on his fist.
He teeters, seated, at a library
computer kiosk. Forearm flexes
life from this tired teen. Behind him,
his gym bag splayed of ambition
and a jacket unfit for this temperature.
Shoulders shift, sway
into my peripheral vision.

He has the whole world wide
web in front of him. Searching
questions are not if he's read
but fed. Where he'll rest next.
Whom he'll dream and fear with,
before pixels dim and more
nights stalk this wanderer.

That Bus Driver

One bus driver disrupts rush hour,
halts *bimmers* and *benzes*,
with her arm out the window,
risking delay and the ire of riders.

One bus driver absorbs horns
in her open palm, below thirty,
sparing this jaywalker time
to cart bagged belongings.

One bus driver's pause demo's
empathy for someone crossing
outside counts and lines
who's rarely gifted patience.

That Mannequin

Stoic despite the half-nelson.
Elbow snapped—cracked like a plastic
hanger by unblinking sales staff
waiting for backup in spring wear.
As a duo, they judo both shoulders
loosening the last jacket in stock.
I preferred black but they flattered me
and how I matched this model's chest.

But this dummy isn't me. Nor is green.
I second guess my second guess
so staff attack with compliments
chase me down a hall of discarded
clothing crowding change rooms
and bribe me with free shipping.
This closet's trio of mirrors
multiplies my doubt.

Even at this age, my image matters
more to them. Our vested interest only
this gift card: credit from that last visit
I returned a button-up.
Then and now, I've tried to avoid
the loitering coyness of sales staff
and rely on an unbiased quiet
mannequins wear to imagine my style.

Except they're in cahoots.
Faceless display figure's bluff
and push pins cinch fabric at waists.
Things are not as tapered
as they seem.

That Gallery Guard

Bullies between rooms unobtrusive
like GARDIA bubbled on his button-up.
He pops more than the floors Pop Art.
Like the humidity, he's a controlling
presence. Gazes like a teacher
that assumes without grading.
Smirks implying his mark's final.

He's Strickland and sees me a slacker,
admitted in, closing looming, I had to
rush a century's hall of Modernism.
Maybe he brands me a product of malls,
or a tourist in it for the knick knacks,
suspicions that make me suspect
myself—observer but canon outsider.

Feeling phony sketching with a golf pencil
(my pen seized at entry, the fear of my ink
as the starting point of his hectoring)
I'm a slow study willing—
as I scan salons for those Struth photos—
to return, hone my approach and keep
deflecting a lurking didact's malocchio.