

Corvid 20 – a rural ride

Carrion caws -
dark eyes among spring's unfolding leaf
watch my struggle
against inertia,
but mostly follow the wayward hatchling
on the ground -
half hidden, urgent for mum.

A white trainer flexes the pedal
describes an arc
turns the wheel.
Click, clack, click
cogs and chain mesh, inelegant
seek for gear.
Together we weave and wobble,
man and machine,
hunting momentum
to ride this sanctioned hour.

Passing St Mary's tower
three Jackdaws peel from
the parapet,
roll like spitfires
laugh sardonically at my earthbound
transport and
eye the sky for peregrines.

I ride the bright air,
fresh, sharp.

My lungs work with efficiency
and I thank them.

I know places where air must travel
through tubes and machines
in need of monitoring,
the breather watched over.

With each wheel's revolution
I breathe a prayer,
hoping for traction.

Along Stockley Lane
horses and dog walkers pass.

In a field a Roe stands alert -
it is not invisible.

There is that which is invisible -
a hidden chimera abroad
bringing to heel
the dogs of our fear.

In vaulted branches
rooks gather, clannish,
obey no social distance
make strident conversation
from bare twigged nests.

Beneath the colony
my passage has no relevance
to their avian economy,
their survival strategy.

I arrive at the village summit
by St Andrew -
Peter's brother –
but today it's Thomas' friendship I seek
his need to witness,
to see himself
the nail prints
of his breathless, breath-full master.

I turn and switch to higher gears,
my lungs relieved.

Homeward bound
I plunge in twenty first
past the shuttered Inn
and rainbow windows
the child's unicorn
hanging in a tree.

A magpie claps its wings -
one for sorrow, two for
two for ...

I pray the baby mallard
has found its protector.