

25/03/2020

The Bike

Holly Howitt, North Wales

I have an excess of energy: it tingles in my legs, and my feet kick out under the kitchen table, which has become my desk, watching the sunshine outside that I'm too afraid to go out into. A few weeks ago, I – or rather, my partner – bought an exercise bike online. I remonstrated, arguing it would be relegated to the garage, crocheted by spider webs in a month. I cancelled the order, but it was too late. A week later, the bike arrived. A day later, we were self-isolating. After the embarrassment of accepting the bike was a good idea, I get on. I pedal harder than I thought I could, resistance at the maximum level, listening to Blondie and cycling at 30km/hr. The first time I heard this album I was 14, having found it in a junk shop I got the bus to every Saturday. I imagine my 14-year-old self watching from the corner of my hall, where I've propped the bike in front of a window. I am watching myself sweat and swear and sing in a dirty t-shirt and the leggings with the hole in. I can hear the 14-year-old say, What the hell, Holly. I could have never imagined self-isolation, then – I might have felt it, alone in the back woods of Wales, unable to drive and isolated by accident – but I would never have understood this strange new world in which I had to exercise behind a closed window, had to go nowhere on a static bike, singing tonelessly to a song I don't even like that much, didn't like then. What the hell, Holly.