

EDGELL RICKWORD

PROVINCIAL NIGHTPIECE

When girls return from tennis on
their bicycles of hollow steel
through their veins' colder channels steal
the sentiments of Tennyson.

Those censers of impurity
infect the air with banal dreams
of lovers by exclusive streams
and plagues of dear fatuity.

Or otherwise they long to bear
ten children to some honest John;
content, whilst he is getting-on,
to darn his sordid underwear.

In cardboard hats and paper shoes
and art-silk impudence they glide,
all substitute. Could beauty ride
Godiva-like, and use no ruse?

The Proustian idyll's flowering grove
was blighted by poor key-hole Tom:
pudeur's drawn blinds had saved us from
the forward vision blasting love.

Yet I have bedded, I protest,
the paragon of élégance;
when Night with his star-dripping lance
feathered my solipsistic nest.

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