

## THE BICYCLE POEM

You zig-zag down the winding road where you first drove a car  
a pale green Bel-Air it was Tommy Payton's  
you were fifteen his face was like a munchkin's he was your pal  
you liked drinking milk and eating turkey club sandwiches with him at the Big E Diner  
you laughed when he said where's Virginia Beach?

You pass the house where you heard a suicide over the phone  
bang  
where you colored in the white flowers of the wallpaper with a box of 64 Crayola  
crayons  
where it was always cool even in the dripping summer steam  
where you danced to Mott the Hoople  
where your friend Charles wore dresses when he walked the dog

You turn up a dirt road with a grand name  
it still has ruts  
you see the black skeleton of the main house it was built during the Revolution  
she told you not to look it would make you sad  
Sheba the dog doesn't bark the red flag on the mailbox isn't raised there are no lawn  
chairs holding visiting grandmas  
you cried and cried she got drunk you were sent away to school  
she cried and cried you got drunk her father left forever

You see the foundation of Mr. Davies' house  
he was murdered inside of it the one with stained glass a porch a sailor's rope in a  
sailor's knot  
now it is an arboretum  
the pond is getting smaller and drier  
the ice house still stands but the roof is gone  
you took your dog Kelly there during a quiet snowstorm it was Christmas night

You pass the country club with the golf course  
you lost your toboggan you were drunk you said we are in Alaska crossing the tundra  
you fell into a drift you made an angel  
you ran in the heavy darkness of a humid night before a summer rain your feet were  
bare you were scared you stopped at the tenth hole you kissed a boy you stole the  
flag it's in his garage

You see that house it looks like Boo's  
it's the boy's with the caramel hair and the flickering grey eyes  
he picked you a white flower in the green woods  
he called you his lady  
you sunk your toes into the mud

In the dark on the path on your bicycle named Bessie  
you crashed into a motorcycle  
you got wet you hit your head you bruised your arm  
Bessie got rusty

You pass Mrs. Price the fat crossing-guard on Hardenburgh Avenue  
she still wears white sunglasses you've never seen her eyes  
she still chews gum it must be Bazooka

You ride down the street of many children one house had thirteen another nine three  
others seven  
your first boyfriend was the sixth of the house of nine  
you liked his blond hair and his purple shoelaces in his high-topped sneakers  
he rode you double to the pool on your blue Schwinn Breeze

You round the bend near your house where you fell out of a car twice in one night  
you climbed out the window  
you went to the coop with your best friend and Derek and his best friend the four of  
you danced among the unfinished paintings you kissed Derek 'til ten to six  
you hit your head climbing in the window your shirt was inside-out your best friend  
was hungry she wanted toast

You pass Doug Moore's house the boy you figured you'd marry so you wouldn't have  
to change your name  
you went to a party there you took five blue pills  
you couldn't find your way home you walked through a stream in a flowered dress  
your mother said you're drunk you tried to say you hadn't drunk a thing  
you couldn't talk you couldn't stand you fell

You reach the cliffs over the Majestic Hudson  
someone falls off every year and dies  
you saw a shiny Irish setter fall it screamed it got caught in the branches of a tree  
you left your bicycle there you still don't remember how you got home your friend  
Teddy said we don't need them we can fly

You start down the hill you pass the stone gas station you see the purple mountains at  
the other side of the valley  
you learned how to drive a four-speed on this hill  
you get butterflies at this dip ooh  
you turn left at the Bailey's of Barnum and  
you coast past the pond your mother took you to a red-headed swan lived there now  
there are mallards  
it's getting dark you peddle faster through the scary stretch past the empty barn  
you've seen bats at dusk