

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

David Barnes

Two-Wheel Poem

One wheel is made from the circle of my right ear
left unbruised by the hand of a surgeon denied
his medicines of amphetamines and beer.
The truck horn of his palm echos down my street
and becomes a wheel of words stretched tight
between spokes of anger and wedges of emptiness.

One wheel is made from the sound hole of a guitar found
in the Tlatelolco barrio of Mexico City. Wooden
minor chords meet bent-steel sevenths to glue
classical harmonies to hot-blood blues shrieks
on Kerouac's Tristessa street. The not-forgotten
lost songbook becomes the axel pedals use
to crank a poem into a song, a song into a novel lost
in translation, and written with my own knees on
Cambridge street maps in the dark.

One wheel follows the other connected by the pipes
of brick sidewalks and soprano shrieks. Wet lips
are in the welding, bare hands are on the handlebars.
Life here is easy as writing a sonnet on my knee
while my bike dodges cell-phone SUVs on Mass Avenue
to find Squawk Coffeehouse in the rain.