

## Changing Gears

Even today    over forty years rush by  
at the speed of sound  
each time i approach the intersection  
of Henley Beach & Tapleys Hill Road

i was stationary at the traffic lights  
that particular summer's morning  
    sitting on my BSA Gold Flash

a screech of tyres alerted me  
    & then the sounds of crushing  
metal & shattered glass before  
the hiss & rise of steam  
    & though mid-morning on a  
Saturday  
    there came a stillness then  
that still spooks me even now

it was the front seat passenger from  
the car with the broken windscreen  
i saw first  
    she looked close to full-term in her  
flowery smock  
    had both her hands cupped around  
her nose  
    but even then i was thinking of her  
unborn child . . .  
until she dropped her hands & i saw  
her nose was spliced across the bridge  
back to her cheeks

i'd like to say i was an urban hero  
    tell you how i kicked the side-stand  
out & ran to her aid  
    but i was barely sixteen & the flow  
of blood terrified me

all i could do was click the gear lever  
one-up & let the clutch out quickly  
    hell i've seen plenty of blood  
since then –  
    much of it my own

i'll never know if she & her unborn baby  
made it through safely  
    my only hope is they did . . .  
& that she doesn't remember that day  
anywhere near as clearly  
    as i still do.