

Helen Gill

“WE’RE RIDING ALONG ON THE CREST OF A WAVE ...”

“We’re riding along on the crest of a wave ...”
my dad would sing from the driver’s seat
about an hour into a family holiday.
I always thought it was the “Christopher wave”
and I wondered who Christopher was
and which beach his wave broke on.
I would sing along and chew my Juicy Fruit
gazing out the window.

I press my head against the bus window
and wonder if the vibrations
will stimulate my brain.
Get my mind thinking of anything other than
being alone and the beep
of every other passenger’s mobile phone.
There’s something about riding in a vehicle
especially at night time
that stirs a delightful melancholy in me

I used to think the undertow at the beach
was called the undertoad
fat and green, covered in algae
he’d swim up and take you out to sea.
I had a doll called The Christopher doll
(maybe it was his wave)
He had a fluff of thick blonde hair
and a little plastic penis that I had chewed.
My haircut when I was two resembled
the Christopher doll’s hair
It was called my Christopher haircut.

When I was twelve we used to drive into the city
to visit my sister in hospital
what seemed like every night of the week
for what seemed like years.

On the way home I would lie back
across the back seat
the seat belt digging into my ribs.
While my parents talked bitterly in front
I would gaze up through the window
into the night sky
and count the freeway lights perched up on their poles.
Then watch the stars slowly appear
the further we got from the city glow.

Being a passenger and just sitting back
letting someone take me somewhere.
City lights and head lights,
rain and windscreen wipers.
Desert darkness.
No choices to be made,
just to be pulled along through landscapes.
On a string, on a tide.
Dragged down by the undertoad
riding along on the christopher wave.

