

Stephen Robertson

The wind in my ear

Lying on my back in the middle
of the rug, aged ten or so,
I see a version of myself. The shade
on the hanging lamp above my head
is a copper bowl, the bulb within
casts its light on the ceiling.
The underside of the bowl
is shiny, and reflects the room
around me, as in a fish-eye lens.
Two well-used comfy chairs, each
with its own small table and lamp.
Beside me the hard old sofa, more like
a dining chair than something
you could sleep on. Between the chairs
the fireplace, and behind the sofa
the curtained window. To one side
the desk, to the other the grand piano.

Sometimes there is someone there who
will play the piano for us, but it has
a double life. It is also a pianola:
if you thread correctly one of the rolls
of perforated paper from the box,
then lower and treadle the special
set of foot pedals, it will play
by itself, a re-rendering of some
past recital.

But the music that I hear is not from
the piano. Beside the desk stands
a radiogram, which can play
(as well as records from the stack
of shellac seventy-eights) one of the
newly minted vinyl LPs.

Kathleen Ferrier, *Blow the Wind Southerly*
or *Come you not from Newcastle*,
or Peter Pears, with Britten at the piano,
The Bonny Earl o' Moray,
or *The Foggy Foggy Dew*—
these are the worms in my mind's ear.