

## The Knowledge

Not the knowledge chosen for the national syllabus, nor knowledge scrawled by Mrs Smith on the board in shaky chalk, but the knowledge I heard my father practise, out loud after tea.

Not a knowledge of capital cities, of England's football captains, the number of caps of David Beckham, nor any pub quiz question, but a knowledge of maps, of London's maps in more than three dimensions.

Maps that covered the dining room, a cheap print of *The Hay Wain*, of *Bubbles* and our photographs. Maps he rose each day to enter, a clipboard on his handlebars, to expand his hippocampus.

*Manor House to Gibson Square; Archway to Gloucester Gate; Penn Street to Portland Place; Consort Road to MoD via Peckham Rye and Westminster Bridge.*

But I can't buy the wisdom that vocation is hereditary – that sons should give their lives to do the jobs their fathers did. I learnt instead not from the front, but from the back seat of his cab

that ferries the decision makers, Canary Wharf to Portcullis House, past navvies tunnelling the Underground, through the husk of blackout London, and to here and now: this argument.

Taught to speak by sixteen years of answering the register, by milk, chalk and cartridge ink, Shakespeare and the Lord's Prayer, I raise my arm to pay my coins, my tributes to the knowledge.

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