

## Free Carwash

Jeff Smithpeters

A pledge stands at the intersection with a posterboard.  
I turn off my blinker, drive straighter, turn later  
Than I'd intended, using the same blinker again.  
I drive into line, a 4-wheel drive Toyota before me.  
It yearns to be bright, but dried mud denies.  
It wants to let the sun see itself on its enamel  
But the impulse is smothered in the filthy past.

While I wait, a dead guitar group plays for me only,  
Though I am yet unborn—like the way I think of her.  
I suppose I am either to be washed or washed away.  
I suppose supposing does as much good as  
Windshield wipers that will not move. Pledges nod.  
The Toyota radiantly departs and I, unparked, proceed.  
I, suddenly attention's gracious center, cut the engine.

I have had pretty dreams no stranger than this.  
Who crowned me and enthroned me on chrome and  
wheels  
That many might bow, apply effort, devote time to me?  
Pledge masters, yes. But let me usurp the moment:  
Let me for this trim span believe I am chosen,  
Allow the ardor of gratitude to soften my thoughts,  
Though I know what pours forth these washers isn't  
clean.

I control. I have rolled my windows up, feel no drops.  
I watch the profusion of soap, glorious cream, redeem  
The windshield. I savor the gush of water stopped  
By shut doors. Music plays. Slowhand solos,  
languishing

Against the silence as pitifully, as surely, as a drop on hot  
glass.

Now daylight adorns my car. Pledges nod. I wave,  
Driving forth. A crunch. I have run over a bucket.