

Ken Meisel

Cruising

Baby let's cruise, away from here
– Smokey Robinson

If cruising down fast highways must equal
the great American pastime, like some rite

of passage people engage in, for lust's élan,
there must be a required selection – some juke box

of tunes and cars for the commemoration –
for the idolatry of drag racing and trick shifting.

Say, Smokey Robinson's great song, *Cruising*,
dialed up on the car's cassette deck: let's call it

a 72' Buick Electra – with those rectangular fins
and 12 bars of taillights – speeding fast down

the Pacific Highway , Gratiot Avenue , old US 66,
or, say, a 55' T Bird, a Torch Red convertible,

its grill in a metal menace and its headlights,
staring vacant and intense over the two lane

with the Beach Boys single, *Fun, Fun, Fun*,
dialed up loud, the cops in pursuit, or say,

Low Rider , by War, firing up like guitar bullets
from a 1951 Hudson Hornet – its metal grill

in the eager grimace of a stargazer fish – as it
marauds down Telegraph Road , chasing

a 1951 Olds Rocket 88 as that racer's radio
blasts Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cat's

song by the same name. Some might dial up
Little Red Corvette , by Prince, as they steer

their red 59' Corvette Stingray down ramp
onto Interstate 75, to dual with some dude's

1983 Porsche 911SC Cabriolet and, bored,
could zoom southbound to a motel pool –

to bring the song to life. One more, for your
older brother or cousin who first turned you

onto rock & roll: No particular place to go,
Chuck Berry, or *Maybelline*, and a 1950 Ford

chasing and catching the girl in a 52' Cadillac,
the edge of the fields drowned in city lights

and every escape you ever dreamed of, right here
and now, just like a diamond and a promise.

Zepplin's *Going to California*, stoked up loud
in your 55' Dodge convertible, or a Sun Burst

Yellow 56' Lincoln and *Hot Rod Lincoln*
blasting loud as a crime by Commander Cody.

Could it be that in our reach and stretch for
the horizon's tip of risk, we drive all night

to hit the farthest edge of love and desire –
where the lesser angels, too timid, fear to go?

Springsteen in 80', standing alone at the mic,
singing to his girl, *you've got my love, heart and soul*.

And one more: *you, reader*, in your favorite car,
with the one *you* love, or the one that got away –

you at the wheel, revving its engine in the night:
in that wild exhilaration of fast cars and songs.

You there, your muscles tense with energy, with
songs on the radio pulsing your blood into fire –

taking your barely contained mania to the wire –
in your motor rocket, your favorite car, a highway star .

Ken Meisel is a poet and psychotherapist from the Detroit area. He is a 2012 Kresge Arts Literary Fellow, Pushcart Prize nominee, and winner of the Liakoura Prize. Recent books include **Mortal Lullabies**(FutureCycle Press: 2018) **The Drunken Sweetheart at My Door** (FutureCycle Press: 2015). He has work in *Midwestern Gothic* and *Rattle*.