

Cultural Daily

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Lee Rossi: "To the Teenager I Nearly Hit on Fairfax"

Lee Rossi · Thursday, July 5th, 2012

Lee Rossi's latest book is *Wheelchair Samurai*. His poems, reviews and interviews have appeared in *The Harvard Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*. He is a staff reviewer and interviewer for the online magazine *Pedestal*.

To the Teenager I Nearly Hit on Fairfax

You've done this dozens of times –
 falling off the curb with your buddies
 like a trio of empty trashcans
 blown by winter
 into the path of oncoming traffic –
 trucks full of gardeners from East L.A.,
 mothers with infants strapped into their SUV's,
 hotheads in BMW's gunning for the freeway –
 and had them stop short, like a heart
 whose pacemaker battery just expired.
 Oh, you felt good, didn't you, Three Wise Men
 in your sweats of Emerald, Ruby, & Gold
 on your way to buy Cokes or play b-ball or just hang out,
 the flag of Africa come to life
 & out there in the street waving its come-hither
 to herds of killer horse power.
 Oh, I've been there too
 daring the world to run me over,
 cops with bullhorns, soldiers with bayonets fixed,
 Presidents who thought my life was theirs to lose.
 And guess what, they didn't bother
 to wipe the tear gas from my eyes
 or lift me gently from in front of the troop train
 or halt the truncheon in its downward arc.
 So this time I'm not stopping either,
 not even slowing down.
 In fact, you'll see me speed up
 so that when I miss you, by inches

you'll look up, maybe, & know there's something out here
that wants to play your game,
and when it beats you,
you hurt all the way to the grave.

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