

THE PATRON SAINT OF COMMUTERS

NOEL SLOBODA

Forever coming or returning—
too intent on miles ahead to settle

for any single destination
let alone pause for conversation—

he keeps one bleary eye trained
on jagged yellow lines

just visible through trees
dangling from his mirror—

sun-bleached pines that never grow;
his other eye glued to needles

that tell him absolutely nothing is
wrong. He frets about

every little squeak and rattle
heard over the sweet hum of asphalt.

He fears the gradual loss
of pressure in his Goodyears

and worries about the taint
of ethanol in his cylinders.

Usually hidden behind
a bug-speckled screen

halfway between today and tomorrow,
I once saw him up close

leaning against a pump,
sclerotic legs bowed, one dark

hand on a gunmetal nozzle,
the other pale and throbbing

as it choked the life
out of an invisible wheel.