

Weekend Baroque

R. T. Smith

In John Clegg's driveway the green
Buick's hood is up, as he studies
the knock and rattle, touches

the plugs for tightness, listens
hard for any flaw in the guts, any
slippage of belt or raw scrape

of steel on steel. I'm no help,
leaning on the porch rail, sipping
morning-after beer. An engine makes

no claims on me, unless sheer
mystery qualifies as claim. Imagine
the wild baroque of Bernini, gold

leaf tortured to the holy. But
automotive science goes wrist-deep
in oil and grease, in shadow, I say,

more like de la Tour, all those
skulls in candlelight, sweet-faced
women considering repentance. An

engine hums strange polyphony
to my ignorant ear, as if Vivaldi,
Bach or Scarlatti were amplified

over the Amazon, a high contrast scherzo
of Chris Wren worked onto measured
wind, the jungle pausing to wonder,

but John Clegg's skinny ass in Levis
lifts to the morning air, and all
the hint I get of a sonata's

agate coil of imagery is a drone
and some smoke from the exhaust,
so tilt another Bud for domestic
technics dancing free with art, even
John's cracked voice humming unkempt

Cajun chanky-chank to the tune
of a piston that's true and just in,
just in, just in bayou time.
Bend the can baroque to fit the mind.