

## DRIVING

---

*Paul Meacham*

After Bernardo Luini's *The Christ Child Asleep*

There is the steel and black vinyl of the dashboard,  
its tachometer, the orange needle waves above, now  
below the constancy of my velocity, the miles click  
past and roll over in tenths, and , always, there  
is the image, pale and sad, the sleeping face  
of the child beneath her chin.

I am an observer  
in that circle, the innocent over her shoulder  
offering and roll of brown parchment tied  
with twine,

or in the foreground, cherubic,  
with white linen in my hands.

I am the one who looks out  
from the painting's

shadow, who presses  
the clutch, cuts the engine  
after the thousandth mile and coasts to a stop  
at the side of the highway, to stretch  
his legs beside a roadsign that says  
*soft shoulder*, to gaze into the star-saturated sky,  
the silent dark of the desert emptied.