
Pro Rege

Volume 32
Number 2 *Fine Arts Issue* 2003

Article 12

December 2003

Sometimes I Think I'm All Right

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Recommended Citation

De Smith, Bob (2003) "Sometimes I Think I'm All Right," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 32:
No. 2, 21.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol32/iss2/12

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Sometimes I Think I'm All Right

Robert J. De Smith

Sometimes I think I'm all right,
As when I parallel park:
I eyeball the rear seat of the sedan on my right,
Hit reverse and begin a deft, one-handed spin of the wheel;
I feel the smooth arc of the pickup as we back;
I shift my glance among mirrors,
Now counterturn, hearing the rubber change camber
(Did I say my window is open, elbow resting on the door?),
I slide the pickup in perfectly parallel
(A success by definition)
I don't even need to pull ahead to even things out.
Not bad! I could be parking a bus.

My face is a composed blank:
I'm Sir Philip Sydney and his
sprezzatura, which Right Guard translates,
Never let them see you sweat.

But if you look closely,
My right-hand tires have a few scuffs:
I've missed—distracted, hurried—
No, sometimes I've just missed.

And sometimes I've spilled my coffee on the floormats;
Sometimes I've even forgotten the insulated mug
And so gotten two chances to practice the park.

Sometimes I've parked too close on ice
And late in the day the first spin slides me
Down the road's vicious crown
Wedging my rears against the curb—
I'm stuck.

Well, that's what the shovel's for,
And a bit of sand,
And a little fancy technique with my left foot on the brake.
If it works right, I pop jauntily up the curb,
Then drive away a whole new way.