

R.G. Cantalupo

## Stopped at a Light

I see a man tightrope  
a broken line. Cars gore  
the air around him.  
He totters in their wake.  
He's in his late forties,  
dirty blond, blood shot  
through his eyes, a piece  
of cardboard cradled loose  
as a rifle under his arm,  
one scrawled word: "*hungry*".

I close my eyes—see him now  
wadding through a rice paddy,  
tracers sparking the blue,  
a ghost platoon fanning  
out around, a brother to  
my hands, my tongue,  
my eyes—see him and for  
a flash imagine I can save  
him, pull him out of the dark  
water, give him another life,

but then the light changes,  
and I realize I can't, I can't,  
I'm late, and the light is  
green, and there are so many  
streets like this, and so little  
I can change by going back.

**R.G. Cantalupo** was awarded a Combat Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts during his tour in Vietnam. His work has appeared in over a hundred literary journals both nationally and internationally. He has published four books of poetry.