

WAITING FOR THE BUS

the bus stop is crowded today.
dresses and suits, heels and ties--
the second skin of sardines
jam-packed in a makeshift
plexiglass shelter.

bullets pitter-pattering against my
umbrella, standing out in the open--
a woman

a stranger

a pariah

like a gargoyle, redirecting the
droplets to the cool, hard ground.

the door to the cafe across the street
swings open and a woman comes
tumbling out into the walkway, the rain,
the dozens of feet. a man dressed
in a button-down and slacks points
an accusing finger and shouts
from the doorway before disappearing.

the woman stumbles clumsily to
her feet, shouting expletives loud
enough to hear over the din of
traffic. it was obvious she was drunk
at eight in the morning.

pedestrians on their morning commute
parting like the Red Sea as she escaped
the deluge under a canopy. she put a
cigarette between her lips and lit it,
a lick of vibrant red-orange bright amidst
the monochrome of the moving street.

she was looking at me.
through all the bodies, the vehicles,
the downpour, the street,
she was looking at
me.

her rat's nest of hair was the
same hardened caramel,

her eyes--the same
deep, bottomless brown,
the inner corners of her brow
turned down with the same
intensity.

i felt the strange urge to
go to her
this outcast

 this friend

 this sister

to rush into the oncoming traffic,
splashing and floundering and flailing
through a churning maze of
screeching horns and bitter exhaust.
i would seize her by the hand and
ask her--beg her--to
take me with her.

the bus screeched to a stop--a pale, blue cloud
simply hovering there. someone released
the sardines and they began filing into their
new tin can.

i thought of the woman--that warm
hum of orange and then
a thin tendril of smoke
rising, rising, rising
from her lips.

the umbrella snapped shut and
she stepped onto the bus.

WINTER POPPIES IN THE SNOW

What you have heard is true.

I watched as he opened her throat and dressed her in a sanguine gown. How those fair arms twitched like a faulty clock hand--eyes filled to the brim with a thousand unfulfilled promises. A delicate swish from that gown of gore waved goodbye at me as she plunged over the ledge.

He laughed. He *laughed*.

I was suddenly on him, dousing myself in the heat of his lifeblood. I realize now I should have looked him in the eye--relished in that horror like a chilled drink on a smoldering day. But all I could see was the white of my knuckles, holding the struggling marionette steady as a trained puppeteer. My tender white skin was decorated in splashes of crimson. It reminded me of something--

SACRILEGE

Skin on skin,
milky and fair,
rosy cheeks,
red lips.

Intertwined in an
endless labyrinth.
Bodies.
Mounds of
bodies.

Purples and
blues and
greens and
yellows.

But the reds.
The reds.
Bright against
that pale
skin.

703.200.0299

skip the how are yous
and tell me something worthwhile
go ahead, light the fuse
of your complexities--rile