

SELF-PORTRAIT IN GREYHOUND BUS CATHERINE RANKOVIC

Crushed in the back where the stateroom-
style stainless-steel toilet's irreparable commode
sloshed the rubber-matted floor, all of us in polyester fleece
or grimy parkas, 112 bodies bound like cordwood
in a bus labeled "Capacity 84," our driver "Safe Reliable Courteous"
got us stuck in Friday-before-Christmas rush
on the expressway two miles from Chicago's Union Station
where our 5:30 p. m. connections to all points wouldn't wait for us.
Parka-to-parka with a twelve-year-old cipher whose breath was
condensing on my sweater, I watched her styte, like a tomato seed,
develop on her eyelid. And then to this girl whose scalp I hated
more as we traveled a mile in an hour, whose unpierced lobes
I itched to have a needle for, I said, when she looked at me, "Ugly,"
a word I wanted so terribly to say I could not have stopped it.