

51: West Hamilton Loop

niko haloulos

I saw you sitting there,
 Your back curved slightly over the steel bench,
 Two thighs shaking in the daylight, failing to thaw,
 At the corner of STERLING / UNIVERSITY
 Beneath the stained glass of the Divinity College,
 Your head superimposed over the hands of a Saint
 Whose name I didn't care to know.

Whichever Saint that is,
 Or whichever Saint that was,
 They can't reach you the way I should have,
 When I watched you wipe the corners of your eyes with a dampened sleeve,
 And when I watched you pull the phone back slowly from your ear.

Pivoting on the bench,
 You saw the bus coming,
 and with one last fraught sigh
 from your trembling lips,
 a storm cloud in the cold,
 you stood.

... The world suddenly tipped—
 —and the Saint suddenly reached,
 trying desperately to keep your body
 in their glass arms.

In this moment fear stuck itself behind a mask,
 A blurred contortion reflecting from the bus window.
 The restless fray of people crowded at the stop,
 In search of lines east and west,
 Curious if they could move north and south,
 Trudging through the rootless grounds of autumn,
 Waiting for winter's kiss.

When I saw you
 in the middle of the bus,
 shaking,
 I wish I reached for you
 Like the cupped hands of
 Saint Nowhere
 longing to save one soul
 On the 51 West Hamilton loop.

