

ON THE RAISED PLATFORM

above the sticky road,
slick with morning rain
that failed to cut
the muggy air, now trapped
beneath this awning
in a steel bath of heat,
we sit through it—
though not long enough
to brave the 200-yard line
outside the Chicago Institute—
perhaps because the sublime
is hard to access
amid waves of appetitious phones
uploading pixelated Van Goghs
to the cloud;
well, anyway,
a city this vast
offers endless possibilities;
we've barely glimpsed
its rugged,
immeasurable surface,
but there's time;
and as the train
rocks around the bend,
I think,
the world's a work of art,
crafted by an amateur—
though persistent,
with a penchant for shock,
as we witnessed in their work:
a dozen tanned aristocrats
in white,
decorated like Easter cupcakes,
trotting past
a pale man's pants
fallen in the mud,
a street reeking
of soiled sheets,
while a family smiled

over sprinkled donuts;
this artist—
the world-maker—
is hard to understand,
I see no purpose
in his work, no grasp
of rhythm or form,
none of Homer's fluid thematics,
nor Dante's divine visions;
he speaks
a language, but not one
I understand,
much like the inaudible
murmurs and mumbling
of the station intercom,
so I dream of a world
saved by better artistry—
the gentle regard
of its elevated
citizenry—
this world, however, lacks
soil for such a flower
to bloom,
such things don't grow
on grimy concrete,
and anyway,
the kind of meaning a modern
Homer might send seaward
is obsolete—
now that human worth
is sufficiently codified
by economic calculi,
and modern heroes
take their children on vacation,
shopping for cupcake wardrobes
in the bustling heat of Chicago,
and would never dream
of turning down Calypso
for Penelope