Bus Stops

I.

I do not love myself
when I chase after the bus
in scuffed-up Chucks
one size too small—

especially after midnight,
with a day’s pay in split tips
crimped against my chest
like a paisley pocket square.

Friends, forgive me my
dismissal of the upturned palms
that wait for ten lifetimes
beneath those barely heated lamps.

I am just like anyone else—
paranoid and in a terrible rush.
And I just want what everyone wants—
to be left alone, unmolested,
with my headphones in.
II.

A shrink once told me
that it’s a sickness
to love and fear a thing at once.

But all these melancholy
strangers, so very close together,
slowly going mad
in the same cardinal direction!

All their eavesdroppings,
their trembling knees!

In this lanyard of tragedy,
this heaving rainstick
of swollen gums and joints.

In this tartarated caravan
of localized itinerants—

how else to make sense of
such motion and such stillness?
III.

This is summer camp come roundabout, these glacial sunrises spent waiting for the bus.

Sometimes it’s early, sometimes it’s late, sometimes it passes me altogether, as a mudslide might a root.

No one goes walking so early in the day.
Not beneath this grey and salmon sky.

Not while street cats cuddle by the exit ramps and corner stores are shackled in their cells.

It’s not like me to trust a thing this much—to ferry my body, alive and on time,

to the dreamland of work, paralyzed and in endless locomotion, selfless and indebted.

A little girl, unaccompanied, breathes on the glass and traces a curly-haired stick figure in the condensation.

When I was her age, I sat in the back with my Game Boy.
I said cruel things I didn’t understand or mean.

And I pretended not to notice my mother, eternal on the curbside.
IV.

I do not love—and in fact I hate—it when the bus starts moving while I’m still standing

and I have to hook and stomp my way from strap to strap and rod to rod like some courier in a sandstorm.

But that’s the thing about busses:

You’re standing still and you’re standing still and just like that, you’re moving.