

my mouth-tray filled
with the ash of your kiss,
my veins scratched

by your cocktail-glass,
no difference now
between blood & whisky.

I glisten
under the brass-lamp,
my face scarred,

the conversation guillotined
on my skin —
The night runs

to a close,
a refugee from your sympathy —
I offer you the morning.

Agha Shahid Ali

School Bus

On the school bus
the children exchange sandwiches,
watch the river
that always runs to meet them,
or compare movies
flashing by their windows.

They never see the driver
frozen in the last frame,
the ooze of painkillers
gathering like pools of lead
in the bottom of his boots
or
the revolver
cradled in his lunch bucket.

Mel Dagg