

## Field Trip

Bus windows stutter open.  
Calves and thighs adhere to grey institutional vinyl.

Squeals bounce

*Dawson's Creek* &

Jay-Z

&

who's asked which U of D boy to prom.

Our teacher stands, grabs hold of a seat  
as we lurch through the parking lot.

"Girls! Girls! Quiet down!"

That lasts two minutes. My plaid-skirted classmates  
are back onto *Gilmore Girls*, AP bio, field hockey.

Beside me, my best friend.

I haven't slept well since we met a year ago. My math notebook curls  
with letters I can't give her, and my wallet holds as treasure the one  
she wrote me, mundane but signed *love*,

as all these girls sign notes, link arms in the halls, hang photos of  
friends in lockers, braid hair in class, so casual in their intimacies  
while I cry in the library at lunch, headphones on:

*Ohhh oh, you're too afraid to touch, too afraid you'll like it too much*

My crush, my love, my all-consuming shame and hunger

for whom I regularly lie and make excuses, whom I enable  
and save and spend quarter after quarter talking down from  
pay phones around town

asks me what I'm reading.

In my lap, a library book: *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

She smiles, "So it goes."

My chest clenches.

I turn my pages, try to breathe normally, not be aware of her clinking rings, her laundry soap that's different from mine, her bare banged-up knees tucked neatly under the seat, smoothness grazing my legs at every thumping turn.

*Billy was helped to his feet by the lovely boy, by the heavenly androgyne.*

I read the sentence three times before nudging her.

"Do you know what this word means? Androgyne?"

She smiles again, too slowly,  
finds my eyes and  
holds my gaze too long.

"Yeah. It's like you. Not quite a boy or a girl. Or hard to tell."

Two girls belt out Britney Spears and  
someone chews watermelon gum and  
the bus rumbles onto I-75 and

the wind blows my first love's hair  
[across her face and

I have flaming cheeks and  
a word for myself.