

POETRY

BRAD BUCHANAN

A Gangster's Moll

She lies there, letting the photograph happen
matter-of-factly, looking prone
to stigmatization, exploitation
and sympathy.

What is most obscene
is her indifference—behind her bends
an overgrown adolescent, grinning
intently, dipping his needle into
her shoulder, tattooing what he owns—
her skin, her insistence that everything's fine

She raises her head, looks into the camera
defensively, dull, saying "All this is normal
to us." She is shielding herself from the innocence
that brings such scrutiny. There is no name
to give to this image; she has declined
to be interviewed.

There must be worse things
in her world than we can imagine by looking
at her precarious beauty—the lines
that thicken on her back as we look on
may be obscuring some previous wound.

But that assumption is too convenient
and too superficial to explain
women taking sides in the gun
battles that kill little girls in their rooms;
complicity has its private reasons,
but everyone wants to grow up and belong.