

IMMERSION

I prayed for no problems in the city,
 for my car to shine that day, creaking
 more now than it used to, nagging
 warning lights peppering the dash.
 You tell me to turn right, now left
 at the next lights, try and sneak over
 to that other lane, my windows motion-
 smeared. There's less room to think
 here, less time to breathe—
 urban full-immersion.
 Spaces crammed into slices of alleyway.
 Bloor and College Streets seem the same
 to me—places crushed like too many
 coats in a closet, front lawns stolen
 for turning lanes and bus-stops.

A woman in three-quarter-length tweed
 sighs over her seven-dollar Starbucks,
 the small called 'tall', as if it's a deal.
 Overfilled cups take three hands to safely
 snap lids, no room left for whipped cream,
 even if we'd wanted it. As we head west,
 the tiny drink-holes spurt and bubble over
 like hot mud-springs, spotting our scarves.
 You ask about things I've held back—
 the way crowds hoard their distances.
 I never could just disappear into anything.
 In a chapel-sized record shop,
 I find Jeff Buckley's Grace,
 his haunting Hallelujah raising me
 from rush hour's stop-and-go.
 I hear he was in over his head—like me
 staring up from the street
 to count floors—never found a way
 to keep from drowning.