

Two Poems by Suzanne Cleary
Cardin Reading Series Event on April 16th at 1:00 PM in the Greenberg Center

AT THE FEET OF MICHELANGELO'S *DAVID*

They are not the first couple to stand at the feet of *David*
and kiss as if they are saying goodbye at a train station

with one suitcase set between them and the conductor
leaning out his window, bringing the whistle

to his mouth but not yet blowing it,
pressing the cool metal to his lower lip as he watches

travelers rush past the couple as water rushes
around a stone in a river, oh, like attention itself:

a tumbling, ungovernable thing for all but the geniuses
among us, who somehow can concentrate on something

the tour guide is saying about Michelangelo's study of cadavers.
She wants us to look at David's right hand, which hangs

by his side, slightly oversize, its bulging veins proving
that this is the hand of a living man, pulsing with blood.

It is warm and pliant as the hands of this couple
who stand at the feet of the masterpiece,

who are not the first couple to kiss here, but are the last
for today, for the *Accademia* closes in ten minutes. People

press past to buy postcards, posters, tote bags, to reclaim
their umbrellas, for today in Florence

it is pouring wide angel-wings of rain,
which drips onto the tile floor from the hair

of the couple, from the hems of their coats.
They have come here to get out of the rain.

They kiss at the feet of David because he stands
in the gallery off the lobby, and why should they wait?

What better way to make use of their time, so close
to marble made flesh, to the vast head tilted downward, watching?

EMERGENCY ROOM

When it's your heart you go to the front of the line,
ahead of the hump-backed woman holding a rosary
and the construction worker holding his side
and the woman with long brown hair holding a baby.
You go ahead of the boy with his arm in a towel,
his father holding a cellphone and not looking up.
You walk two steps and then you feel a wheelchair
at the back of your knees, and you sit. I sat.
The florescent light seemed to shimmer like a bead
curtain, and I'm not saying that I saw my life flash
before me, but next I was seeing that day in Rome
when I stood inside the front door of my hotel
watching rain, sudden and hard, fall,
and that old man appeared with a blue plastic bucket
full of umbrellas. How happy I was, I remembered,
to have my choice of colors: red, blue, black, yellow.
I chose a red one, then I put it back, I wanted
the yellow. Everyone on our tour was choosing,
and my husband helping me open the cheap
overpriced umbrella, as rain beaded on my glasses
and it became clear that we would let
nothing stop us, not that day.