

## *On the Redline to Braintree*



On the Redline to Braintree, doors open,  
close, open, until we drag ourselves in  
for another day of reggae and jazz, hip to hip,  
looking at our watches, not looking,  
we all hurtle through the darkness,  
some asleep, some falling asleep, one drunk  
musing to himself, the angry couple  
slinging venom at each other, a child  
wrapped in yellow, leaning from his mother  
like a pulley, the doors opening, the doors  
closing, people looking down or into a book  
to read the *Metro* or to plug themselves in  
to an iPod, falling asleep with their mouths  
sagging like a bag of grain, the train  
rattling on into the poison city with us  
weighed down by love, bound homeward,  
rainsoaked under the emergency exits,  
the Redline running backward, whistling  
like a bird.



In Trinidad, they say  
the steel drum is magical  
and they are right, they read the stars  
in a language we do not know, say  
God is King and their mother  
breathed air into their cells. Inbound,  
outbound, if they wish to hide something  
they heave it to the ocean. In Trinidad,  
they say if they burn off all the crops  
after winter they will all grow back.  
The sun splays colors over wood  
and stone. They say no one goes  
to the airport on Monday, but the dead  
whisper promises in our ears,  
a thousand nightly, and they keep  
their promises. In Trinidad, the streets

fill with cinnamon, a latticed wall of roses,  
and they wait for the dawn to reverse  
the night's ill fortune, because life is sweet,  
they say, taste it, because what's born  
stays born.



We can learn to be human. Or,  
we can stay the way we are,  
head into the burrows, caves, the palaces  
where the blind salamanders live.  
How strange we are sometimes,  
tired men with beer-stained breath,  
women with heavy feet from the day's  
standing, waiting beside us on the train  
in a skin that is sweet at the temples,  
the doors opening to let the world in.  
Do we listen to the songs of beaches  
with silver light intruding on the bronze;  
do we dare search into another's sorrow?  
Are we present for those who struggle?

We have rocks to climb. Rivers  
to cross. Stories to tell. Grasshoppers  
sing in the timothy. Killdeer hover.  
It is time we watered the garden  
and gathered the fruit together.  
I'm telling you, we can learn  
to be human, we can hear the music  
of a continent, the high keys  
of mountain air. We can learn this  
from the waters we carry inside.

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