

# EVENING TRAIN

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# EVENING TRAIN



## Moving House

We were always moving out  
ahead of the next wave yet not  
riding the last wave to the crest

history refracts the burden  
and it all breaks back and down  
and returns yet not the same, tipping

ill fitting puzzle bits of myth  
captured and released  
in transition to dust from real life

as time flows on away beneath  
the ground  
all the endless summer night long

## Evening Train

Train whistle in cold January night  
down by the water  
lonesome sound  
from a long way off  
amid memory forest  
Harlem Avenue 1947  
or 1948  
late  
upstairs  
in the exile bedroom  
at grandparents' house  
across from the house  
of the mysterious famous gangster

in the dark  
under the attic rafters  
hour after hour  
imagining a meaning  
to fit  
the brilliant silvery word  
*Zephyr*

## Taking the El to Work

I make it out the door to the El station.  
It's a hot summer day in 1955.  
Heat waves jump off the El tracks.  
From the train you can see down into the backyards  
Where angels live in dejection.  
Ragged wash hangs there: grey t-shirts without arms.  
Next come vistas of wrecked cars and the bolt factory.  
Downtown I change trains for the North Side  
Or the South Side. One night late  
I'm walking down 35th Street toward the El  
When out of the double doors of a bar  
Explodes a woman screaming as if escaped  
From hell, her torso a red streaming suture.  
I decide I am unsuited for this line of work  
But the next night I'm back on the train to the ballpark.

## **Pancake and Pizza Breakfast**

Yellow Olds with 1970 Iowa plates so bilious you put me in mind  
of adventure  
seeking back in the lost time  
when all it took to inspire the heart with a prolonged rush of  
expectation  
was the idea of a deranged weekend at the Dells

## Nice Surprise

There toward the end of that last Millennium, with only about sixty more years to go, when things were finally beginning to become just that little bit clearer, it was thought time to provide the child a soft, loyal, companionable stuffed friend.

But by then, it was perhaps too late.

The mask had slipped just enough to reveal the inchoate fear encroaching. What was it, merely a passing shadow, there, behind the child's untrusting eyes. That which had been suspected yet not thus far seen would indeed soon enough become actual, as incipient things have a way of doing.

First it's stuffed bunnies they're giving you. Next it's ice cream and then the nice surprise — you're at the hospital, having an operation.

## The Past

There is no such thing  
as a clean break  
with the past

Chase it off, it comes sneaking  
straight back  
much as a blindly loyal

companion, whose  
company one had never quite earned  
and does not wish to keep



## Point and Shoot

A wee bit  
of intelligent  
direction —

all reality  
that hopelessly  
awkward

and ungainly  
proposal  
forever spilling

over  
into uncertainty  
seemed

to need.

## Words

Even in the middle of nowhere  
there are words

words turn a nowhere into a putative somewhere

Like the arena exhortation at sports events to *CHEER!*  
still flashing in the dark long after the partisans have departed

## Styx

Getting away with it's the easy part  
But what comes later, the flight  
Into incompatible identities  
Taking shadows hostage  
On the descent...