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Streetcar

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the variegated woodpecker's tropical colors
as it shears the snowfield
and reels away the horizon
like a steering wheel spinning
imaging the dazzle of the noonday sun meridian.

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The fourth windowpane is the sky,
sky strung taut, unwrinkled.
The atmosphere's rarefied silence
that does not record, dense blackboard,
its irreducible cloud-colloquies,
only, here and there, a line sign-snippets,
gropings for meaning,
rags of promise.

STREETCAR

to the memory of Sidney Keyes

The streetcar groans down the street.
In its pain, poor thing, it lurches.
On the yellow animal's dwindling
electric-milk we hang in bunches.

From the depths an African house rises slowly,
it is white and round, like the girl who rose from the sea,
the grass touches the windows' parted lips,
in the curve of an armchair a small salamander sits.

A bathroom—tiles, bakelite—on its own ledge
a steel helmet, colored for camouflage,
preserves the molding helmet-liner, the leather straps,
as its shell preserves a dead turtle's corpse.

They're always fixing the streets.
The stones almost touch your feet
under the thin platform;
as the streetcar jolts along

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they skid close, these crinkled
asphalt pancakes, elephant-skinned.

And like someone sleeping in a baytree who abruptly
comes to.
and feels its black skinlike foliage, so
the night's gigantic branches enfold
the walls of the house. It was here the boy strolled

A scrap of meat in a shopping bag,
the brownish-red juice seeps through,
and a book: *The Dialectical* . . .
we're approaching the bridge,
a liceman's mousy whistle,
below us a foreign barge
transports its tiny houses,
roofs, geraniums, the wind lifting
striped handkerchiefs on a line,
and sailors in sky-blue blouses
—like an Italian village, drifting—

They set out at night. The walls of the house were visible,
no light otherwise. Ahead, on the trail,
a jeep's heavy tread hacks out order,
brushwood crackles, the grass, with a munching, founders.

To the rear a few machines on muted toes,
the cautious clattering of big silent buffaloes—
the gasoline leaves of sloshing, but still
the sun's sickening heat remembers its hot smell.

The bridge banks and dips,
vertigo mounts,
hold on! tighten your grip!
the Buda Hills are above,
wait! the bridge-spans fly,
the unbearably tautened eye
can't keep up with their curves—

He noticed the house dissolving into the night
like a piece of crystal when the ocean churns it.
The foliage clamped tight—ahead, a gray sweep
of lowland, raspy grassclumps. Moonlight, fire, to leap—

Hold on for your life! Whoever
can't will rip away! I wish they would!
Suffocating bodies, body piled on body,
a moving heap of cadavers!

He dropped. The dust sifts, powders his mouth with a fine
ash,
the brakes cry out like knives,
moon all around, the razor-sharp shadows of the grass,
—staggering—the stomach writhes,
alone, all alone, the hands open up, stretch out,
what held together holds no more,
the earth under the heart shudders, pumps in fits,
and crumbles like a soft shore—

STORM

A shirt is running on the meadow.
In an equinoctial storm
it escaped from the clothesline, and now
it slumps-runs over the lush green grass
a wounded soldier's bodiless
choreography.

They're off and racing. The linens.
Below the lightning's muzzle-blast
an army's-worth of ultimate motion,
they're running, the ensigns, the sheets,
with an incomparable swishing
sheared-off foresail, shred,
in the ceaseless green field
falling down, getting up,
the very last linens of a mass grave
flare up for show.

I step out, though motionless,
I run out of my skin,
by a mere shade a more diaphanous runner
with stretched-out body after them, amongst them,
and like a half-wit whose birds have flown off
like an abandoned tree whose birds have flown off
so, with extended arms, they are being called back—