

Train Car Reflection

I sit at the front
of the train car,
facing the opposite direction
as my fellow passengers.

I gaze out the window to my left
and out upon the darkness,
revealing little more
than my own reflection.
Lights from the towers and cars
twinkle here and there,
but as I search
the sleeping streets,
I can't see past my own
big head—
hooded and blending with
the darkness beyond my window.

As hard as I look
for some sign outside this train,
my reflection, unchanging,
continues to sit in the way.

I want to look beyond my own head
bouncing off the glass to my left,
but maybe that's not
what this train intends.

When I try to look
past my own reflection
on the glass,
I see not the people on the street,
nor the cozy couplets
sleeping in their neighborhood homes.
I see the people and their lives
and where they're going in them.

Even on the late train
the conductor keeps the lights on.
He keeps them on
because he must
see the tickets,
and the man with the brown sweater
must stay awake
and keep track of his stop,
so he makes it home and
kisses his kids goodnight.

The lights are on,
mostly, for me, though.
Because this train car
is well-lit, I can't see
out the window.
If the lights were off in
this train car, then I'd look out
into the world beyond this train.

The lights are on in this train car,
so my reflection stares back at me
when I try to gaze out
the window
at the towers and cars
and cozy couples in their cozy
neighborhood homes.

But when my reflection gets in the way,
I look behind it.
I see the reflection of others.
People in my car, on the same train,
all head somewhere different.
Yet, for now, we share this car.

Soldiers sit a few booths down,
they joke with the conductor
and the girls to their right.
They yak and gab about tits,
as if they're normal guys like me.
Where are they going?
Will they remember
sharing this car with me?

White Girls slouch with attention
directed to multi-colored rectangles
in their hands.
Every so often,
her pink lips part
to share her instagram with her friend.
Couldn't she have just tagged her?
Why say anything to each other?
Are they even friends?

Hey, White Girls,
what is the pink rectangle
whom you hold
such an intimate and uninterrupted
relationship?

Am I the only person in this car,
on this train,
who's face is not illuminated
by the screen of a colored rectangle?
Mine died before I boarded—
a sign, I believe,
that I'd soon be introduced to a moment
I should pay attention to.

The soldiers converse with each other.
No colored, rectangle robot sits between
those comrades.

Is that why they're soldiers?
More disciplined and patient
than everyone else, because no
combination of apps and notifications
cloud their sense of humanity?

No, the soldiers aren't so special.
They use cell phones too.
It must just be the White
Girls, who are extraordinarily
un-extraordinary.

Where am I going?
I'm not quite sure.
Maybe I should get off
with the soldiers, or with the man
in the brown sweater.
At least I'd keep him awake...

Considering the reflections
in the window to my left,
I see my train mates
do not notice their own reflections.

I see my reflection—
hooded and dark, like the world
outside the window to my left.
I cannot define that cold, dark world
any more than I can define the
reflection of the man who sits
in the same window.

Somehow, definitions of those White Girls
sit in my mind much more easily.
The shape of those reflections
take form in the window so much
more clearly than does my own.

Looking into the window-world,
their reflections make so much sense
to me.

I see their glazed over eyes
drawn to their colored rectangles,
talking to each other only when a
profile picture is worth discussing
out loud.

I feel so confident that I
recognize their reflections,
when I feel so unsure
that I recognize my own.

However closely I can identify
these White Girls, I only know them
as well as I know the soldier.
I see their reflections, but
I can only take a guess
at where they're going.

Although reflections cannot show
where they're headed
I think I can see
exactly where they come from—

The White Girls with their rectangles,
or the soldiers with
their humble ways,
they come from someplace
that I cannot say, and although
they travel in the opposite direction,
here they sit, talking or not,
in the same train car as I,
in front of the window to my left
that I look out on,
seeing the people—
seeing the world.
However dark and cold it may be
beyond the window to my left,
we all still look out—
the soldier, and the White Girls,
and the man in the brown sweater—
and even if they never look,
the reflections still live on
in the same train car.