

Commuting past the 'Hood

**The 'hood is the 'hood is the 'hood, where a throb in the heart
can keep time, keep time with a sturdy song too blue for the too too.**

Through the train window
I notice inhabited shells
south of the tracks--
hollow-windowed,
mottle-roofed homes.

Open-hooded engineless
cars rust under giant
cottonwoods littering broken
sidewalks leading to front doors
opening into TVs never not on.

Perhaps some brutal mothers
feel free to batter TV-addled
children in these houses,
loose cages to be escaped
for safety in the streets.

Perhaps some fathers are
secrets or stray away
or land jobs in fall-apart
factories for just enough
cash to prolong starvation.

Within this silver train
suburbanites glide safely past
the 'hood with eyes in newspapers
or closed in sleeping bliss,
unaware and uncaring that

south of these tracks might
thrive a rugged richness
not understood by well-fed
hardwood-floor owners
accustomed to gourmet coffee.

Further on, west of the city,
suburban houses appear
all slick and pretty
as polished pain,
some of them transmitting

false alarms to uncaring cops,
some of them serving as
highly mortgaged
coffins for lives
deceased at the roots.

Hand-to-mouth 'hood dwellers
grapple and make do and laugh,
clutch most any prize and die,
few of them ever aspiring
to climb a dollar ladder

or pass away like
moneyed mortals,
trusts all set up,
who shatter as richly
as a falling chandelier.