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Trains in the Dark

Mardelle Fortier
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Trains in the Dark

Mardelle Fortier

In a long Midwestern night the lonely train
sings as it passes like a ghost
and I burrow deeper into blankets
to dream of Paris, Gare du Nord.

In darkness, Degas leaves the train
and strolls, half-blind to his studio,
where his eyes caress a little ballerina
for painting after painting of poses.

In deep fog-feathered evening the train
beats as it marks the seasons passing
and I wake from dreams and try
to sleep, stirred by fantasies.

Rocked by a train, Degas remembers
touching Cassatt's neck as she paused
between brush strokes. His acid tongue
wiped out a romance fragile as pastels.

Through dark the train moans as it passes
breathing across my life--never entering,
leaving me restless and longing; music
like a fickle lover's ambiguous kiss.