

Somewhere South

Somewhere south
 of New Haven,
She found her exhale,
The same breath she'd been holding
 since Providence:
Particles of New England air
Trapped deep in her lung sacs.

She hadn't noticed
Her diaphragm's constriction
Until the train approached a stretch of water
So blue and vast that her muscles sighed
 and settled,
Sinking her into the swaying cocoon
Of the southbound regional.

Rumbling by her window,
The America that met the edges
 of railroad tracks:
Forgotten toys at the way-backs of yards,
Maintenance facilities for manicured resorts,
Faded paint and sprays of graffiti
On abandoned flour factories and textile mills,
 some reclaimed
By artists or shoulder-high sunflowers.

She thrilled to each new image,
For how many times had she visualized
Life in those towns? – not for any reason more
Than to fill the daydreams of an afternoon,
To be transported to another place,
 another time
When freedom would spread
Its broad wings within her.

Where, then, from here?
Secaucus, Wilmington, Newport News,

or points beyond,
Southwards to colonial capitals and Floridian sunsets,
Destinations filled with the miraculous certainty
Of a train timetable,
 whose pages interwove
The adventurous smell of ink
Into each fresh inhale she took.

All sadness lay rooted in the stale air
Of the north, she thought:
No place for it here in this slipstream
 of southerly motion,
No place for it in this new life
She was steadily entering with each
 new breath.