Summer of Clover, Summer of Trains

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Abstract

The clover field stretches down a long hill to a cluster of trees Where a pony stands, flicking his tail at persistent flies. Above the hills to the west, the sun is buried in a wall of boiling thunderheads. The boy watches as a cool, yellow silence drifts across the fields...
Summer of Clover,
Summer of Trains

by Paul Kratoska

English, Sr.

The clover field stretches down a long hill to a cluster of trees
Where a pony stands, flicking his tail at persistent flies.
Above the hills to the west, the sun is buried in a wall of boiling thunderheads.
The boy watches as a cool, yellow silence drifts across the fields.
The clover stirs restlessly and the wind quickens as the storm strikes.
Lightning darts across the sky and sheets of rain slash the air, ripping at the ground.
The wind and water swirl through the clover and steady into a drenching rain.

His mind wants to run, but his walk remains steady on the wet cement.
He is watched over by walls and windows that disapprove, but he has said no.
The man said it was hard to be hungry and he believes him but no,
He has nothing to give. Because he is young the man hopefully follows him
In the accusative silence to the canal bridge by LaSalle Street
Where the gray sky drizzles into the sluggish water, and then the man leaves.
Across the bridge the El thunders darkly overhead like a thousand drums.
The overcast breaks and the sun shows red on the rolling clouds.

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The boy leaps from the porch and runs wet-footed through the long grass,
Following the dog past the storm cellar and down the rutted hill to the barn.
They jump the creek to gather cows in a pasture where the salt block sits in a mud slick.

He picks up a Sunday paper at the hotel coffee shop and climbs to the waiting room.
There are not many people waiting for trains.
   The girl across from him picks her nose;
She spreads her knees and her legs are fat and white, and he moves away.
The men's room is unattended and the shoeshine stand is dark.
Stalls cost a dime and a private room would be a quarter.
   They're free on the train,
But it's four hours to train time, and the walls are interesting.

"... completes the wrap-up here in Municipal Stadium; the final score again was 3 to 2 in favor of the Yanks." The boy turns off the radio and goes to bed.

Everything smells of cigars. He tries to sleep on the wooden bench.
There are one two three four five six seven seats to a bench;
There are one two three four five rows of benches;
Seven times five is thirty-five.
There are one two three four . . . . The trains load in the long sheds filled with steam and the smell of diesel fuel.
His car is filled with a living silence of strangers and the whish of ventilators.
A porter comes through with pillows for a quarter as the train pulls out,
But the car lights stay on mile after endless mile, to Omaha, to Reno, to L.A.
The boy awakens reluctantly. The sun is out and the 
breeze scarcely moves his curtains.
Outdoors he whistles up the dog to go down the hill 
for the cows.

He opens his eyes to a vista of pastures and fields racing past. 
His head aches, 
He is cramped from sitting up all night, and he wants a 
shower very badly.
The train rattles incessantly, roaring as people 
open the door to go to breakfast.
He watches a boy and a dog running across a field. 
For a moment he feels 
The wet grass against his legs, hears the dog and the cows, 
feels the sun warm on his bare arms.
Then he stands, and walks unsteadily down the aisle 
toward the dining car.

The Blues
by John Lewis
English, Sr.

GREEK rubbed his eyes and looked up from his battered 
drums out into the gloom. “The Shadows—Jazz Cen­
ter of 42nd Street”—but it didn’t look much different from 
any other hole in the wall he’d been in in the last ten years. 
Same scarred-up round tables, same rotten watered drinks, 
same dirty light bulbs disguised with crinkled colored cello­
phane. Ghostly shapes of patrons moved in and out of the 
haze. Cigarettes flared, winked, and died in the far corners 
of the room. The stinking smoke choked the rays of colored 
light like a heavy fog. It burnt its way into Greek’s nostrils 
and stung his eyes until they watered. He tried to focus on 
some bright spot in the darkness. There wasn’t any. Just