

Winter

The ten o'clock train to New York;
coaches like loaves of bread powdered with
snow.
Steam wheezes between the couplings.
Stripped to plywood, the station's cement standing
room
imitates a Russian novel. It is now that I remember
you.
Your profile becomes the carved handle of a letter
knife.
Your heavy-lidded eyes slip under the seal of my
widowhood.
It is another raw winter. Stray cats are suffering.
Starlings crowd the edges of chimneys.
It is a drab misery that urges me to remember
you.
I think about the subjugation of women and
horses,
Brutal exposure. Weather that forces, that strips.
In our time we met in ornate stations
arching up with nineteenth-century optimism.
I remember you running beside the train waving
goodbye.
I can produce a facsimile of you standing
behind a column of polished oak to surprise me.

Am I going toward you or away from you on this
train?

Discarded junk of other minds is strewn beside
the tracks.

Mounds of rusting wire. Grotesque pop-art of dead
motors.

Senile warehouses. The train passes a station.

Fresh people standing on the platform;
their faces expecting something.

I feel their entire histories ravish me.

Ruth Stone



Here are some questions to start you off:

- 1 Who is the narrator speaking to?
- 2 What's the effect of the "loaves of bread" simile?
- 3 Why does this poem make you think about death?
- 4 How is a rather depressing and somber mood created, and does this change as the poem goes on?
- 5 How important are setting and the season of winter to the poem?
- 6 Why "Grotesque pop-art"?
- 7 How does the speaker remember the person to whom she is speaking?
- 8 What are the "entire histories" she mentions at the end?