

To Travel the Motor City with No Car

To travel the Motor City with no car
is to grow callous like rust. To routinely
bridge traffic sprinting in each direction.
It is to jump at a car horn while
hopping whole freeways for groceries.

To travel the Motor City with no car
is to keep moving. Syncopate free step.
Smokey in headphones, hands in pockets.
Cruisin' through the narrow steel veins.
To look forward, or for corners. To nod,
when appropriate. To be passed by
the last outbound bus toward Linwood,
the floor stained in dried Faygo.

To travel the Motor City with no car
is to accept being a broken part – a rut
in the cross-grain, a piece of the madness.
It is asking for rides and chancing the dark.
It is snailing through dead parks. Walking
under the ashen arc of the Packard plant.
It is to map-make on the back of your brain.
To reclaim an occupied memory. Learn
to call it your own. Even when it isn't.

To travel the Motor City with no car
is to hear the echoes of old feet
crossing the same cracked pavement
down 12th Street. Call it Rosa Parks.
To imagine LBJ sending war fresh
ain't-been-home-to-kiss-my-momma
soldiers to quell an uprising. Call it riot.
It is to follow in the footsteps of tank treads.

To travel the Motor City with no car
is to shed skin in waves. To ask:
what you know about the Great Lakes?
To purple your bruises sweet in the sun.
To grind like so many things made from metal.
It is to know my song by the rift and jag
of my history. To know my name
by the scars on my feet.