

Spring 1984

## Trains / Departure Time

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### Recommended Citation

Robinson, Bain (1984) "Trains / Departure Time," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 22 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss22/24>

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## TRAINS/DEPARTURE TIME

I've walked the one remaining rail,  
heard the narrow gauge engine's whistle  
echoed off the bunch grass canyon walls  
as the empty ore cars pushed up  
and rode the brake back down.  
How the sound fused with rock, pick,  
voice and water,  
harness and slip scoop in dirt and stone.

And if I could climb rungs into the cab  
and ride down out of the hills  
feeling steam test the gauges.  
I could get off in town,  
cross the yard to the station house  
and stand on Main Street with my hat  
tipped back, jacket slung on my shoulder  
in the small town Johnny Carrol  
built to scale, placed on a plywood board,  
outgrew, and left behind at our house.  
It was a town never named:  
glass windows in tiny wooden sashes  
set in perfectly plumb walls carefully painted;  
street lights pooling the board sidewalks  
in the darkness; a steam express,  
its green coaches lit and rocking.

Here, today, five valleys feed this one  
their streams, creeks, and rivers,  
their twin rails of track  
bringing ore to smelt,  
timber to be cut and planed.  
Here, in the roundhouse center  
of these spur lines and rivers  
are fourteen diesels  
coupled to an oil and grease idle;

their hydraulics, computer linked, flex together,  
relax as one, speak in exhalation.

The closest commuter stop now  
is one hundred miles north over the mountains  
and the train runs twice a week.

This yard makes the freights up after dark;  
the box car thunder,  
the diesels working back and forth  
in their low vibration  
remain subliminal and sweet.

