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Trips to Impossible Cities

He said the white train went to Paris...

The Paris of people's dreams and fantasies...

*The Paris that didn't exist and you would
never find unless you were on that train.*

*He said you wouldn't want to go there, though,
because the white train only makes one-way trips...*

to impossible cities.

*—Peter Roman, *The Mona Lisa Sacrifice**

One-way trains only ever go to impossible cities,
where hearts' desires come to flower
and your every wish is anticipated.

Give me the impossible city, the perfect Paris,
its people wearing shoes made of saltwater,
its streets full of whipped cream and opera,
its fire-breathing street vendors selling
both balloons and bourbon bottles.

Give me books written on illuminated
garlic skin by domesticated foxes;
the cloud-breaking Eiffel Tower
afloat on the buttery backs of croissants.

Give me midgets proposing to plump princesses
in gargantuan apartments with cathedral ceilings,
lit by chandeliers the size of houses,
and then shouting the names of fortune-telling
tourists from the rooftops!

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But no. We can only travel to possible cities,
with their smog, their small rooms and fat housewives,
their misunderstandings and humdrum crimes;
leaving us only with a beautiful lack of knowledge
of things to come, uneasy with half-memories
of impossible perfections, tiny words on papery skins,
footprints of water trailing from the sea.

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