

EXCUSE ME

POETRY

James Washington, Jr.

When I ride Amtrak
through a stretch of cities,
I sometimes want to apologize for my pass-by.
Because I, uninvited, have no business
poking my eyes through a torn night shade
at the back of people's lives.
It's a shotgun marriage that brought
graded crushed stone to where there might
have been a family's proud porch,
built by a smiling mother carpenter,
for her intact family, a dream delivered.
So many spent houses, their backs half-broken
by time and conniving financiers,
have no yards so that Jacob or Enrique
or Janelle can toss a bald tennis ball
to a table scrap eating dog-dog,
which she, with windshield wiper tail,
will clutch drooly-mouthed
and carry far, far into
their would-be memories.