



B & O Blues

By Aileen Cassinetta

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Poems by Aileen Cassinetta

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Locofo Chaps, Chicago

“Go West, Young Man, Go West.”

—John Babsone Lane Soule

“One more train, then we go to
Mexico.”

—Cullen Bohannon

“I worked on that train for years,
getting that train down right. I caught
that train down just like I wanted in a
matter of time. I got the engine part.
Then I had to make the whistle. It was
about, I expect, seventeen years to get
that whistle. It takes time to get this
stuff I'm talking about, original. You
don't get any original stuff like this in
a day or two. It takes years to get it
down piece by piece.”

— DeFord Bailey

B & O Blues No. 3

“Go west, young man...”

As did the railroads before you. And
the immigrants who built them.

By 1868, six years after passage of the
Pacific Railway Act, more than 12,000
Chinese workers were employed by
Central Pacific, laying ten miles of
track a day, eastward (at \$27 per
month), blasting areas for track in the
Sierra Nevada, and paying taxes
without the right to citizenship.

The Union Pacific’s Irish laborers,
mostly veterans of the Union and
Confederate armies, laid track
westward at \$35 per month.

At Promontory Summit in Utah on May 10, 1869 — 690 miles of track from Sacramento, and 1,087 from Omaha—the two railroads met.

The first route connecting the west coast to the east carried a shipment from the Far East to the Old West: Japanese teas.

Not long after, droves of new settlers came. From the Eastern Seaboard, they boarded trains that took them all the way to the Pacific.

B & O Blues No. 4

“There's no anti-texting rule on the trains. So that's another reason [to ride]. If there's no other reason, it's you can use your iPhone. And enjoy it. And you can have a martini or whatever you people drink.”

- Gov. Jerry Brown

“If we could do high-speed rail in California just half a notch above what they've done on the Shanghai line in China, and if we had a straight path from LA to San Francisco, as well as the milk run, at least that would be progress.”

- Elon Musk

fam, get woke #SquadGoals
'bout our congested roads,

traffic's not lit
(have you seen the 405?)

so's the environmental situation
(have you been to the Central Valley?)

and that urban sprawl! high key, we
need
to save the farmland,

and our infrastructure, hundo p
squad's v salty af

7 hours on the road, door to door,
from LA to SF

we're thirsty
to make it less than three

so whether it's the north-south High-
Speed Rail project (HSR for short),

maglev or hyperloop,
make it happen already.

LB/FB.

B & O Blues No. 4.5

— for Raymond Dye

I'm gon grab me a train,
I'm goin' high speed, yasss queen
Oh, gon grab me a train,
goin' high speed, yasss queen
(no shade - but it's so 2015)

My train runs on diesel. Hella dusty.
Well, my train runs on diesel and it's
hella dusty.

Fasho.

Tryna be on time, will ya?

Them non-dems call it, "boondoggle"
Yee, them non-dems call it,
"boondoggle"
Slash and burn, bae

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aileen Cassinetta is a San Mateo County Poet Laureate Finalist and also associate editor of Our Own Voice Literary Journal: Beyond Homeland. Her work includes the poetry collection, "Traje de Boda," published by Meritage Press, and the chapbook, "The Art of Salamat," also by Locono Chaps.

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