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Dark Holiday

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POETRY

FIVE POEMS

DARK HOLIDAY

Some time the day will waken where
the tan grass ripples like
an itch across the cancerous
river silt. As the intelligence

Suspects more than the crude
compulsions of the ignorant,
the masochistic view expands
imagination's tortured flight.

Behind the hollow where I walk,
the railroad closes like a book
upon my cardboard diffidence.
Suggestive as an empty house,

Anger exploits my loneliness; and
persons and places long struck
down, rise up, destroy my mind's
recess, inhabit my heart, tick

With the tears of old injustices.
The landscape crisps to the
inflamed heart, luring the moths
of petty spites, the fluttering

Resentments of delayed revenge. It
is a way of looking beyond birth,
as I imagine fields beyond these
hills—an introverted heritage.

Self-knowledge begets nothing; or, at
 best, records the circumstance
 before the fumbling doctor and
 obtuse police. Here, the horizon,
 Feeding the starvation curse, lends
 its desertion to bitterness,
 conquers the conquerer, impales
 the frustrate victor on its

Pointed emptiness. Wires whine in
 the wind. The mind whirs among
 the cabled tensions of the past.
 Like a black illusion of a

Holiday, the coal-sand, sinking to
 my step, sifts to a beach where
 no one bathes. Now a locomotive,
 bearing down, rumbles its ponderous

Person past. The engine's steam casts
 forth its self-inflicted pain, drives
 out the piston hate of it until the
 wisps dissolve like anger in the air.

THE TOMB OF BAUDELAIRE

Out from the town, desolate at dusk,
 the rail-crossed countryside begins.
 A few sullen trees, grey with the
 breath of the public dump, stretch

Tenuous arms across the pallid sky.
 Too brittle for tears, they long
 have lost leaves' faculty of eyes
 to shed the rain. Yet, there is

A little while, even in this place,
 while life remains, to touch the
 hands' unspoken generosity. Desire,
 like a face weeping behind its mask,