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Home for the Holidays

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They accomplish flight
Well purposed but ungraced:
Yet increasing height

Dims imperfection,
Revealing simple lines
In bold correction.

Distance can thus hold
The unwelcome out of mind:
So am I consoled.

ANN LOUISE HAYES

TWO POEMS

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

We board the train for home because
of the need to travel, and not
to be alone. Inside the coach,
the mind's calm interest finds

Pleasure in the drab upholstery and
the cradled racks. The musty
smell is its own obvious defense
against our crude expectancy.

The plush seats retire like one who
stands beside an open door, but
anxious to recover privacy. The
wheels will punctuate our time

Like repetition of desire; the rails
retrieve our nursery rhyme of
yesterday. If memory is a pleasure,
it is because we love what we

Forget, and all the past acquires
its mild nostalgic tread. Doors
open and slam shut; the draft
slumps like a cat from a fence;

And the cowardly cold is driven back
by the heat that hisses unexpectedly.
What ceases to move ceases to be;
and progression is the only

Perfection. Now the conductor calls
his warning. The train jerks
forward, and our hearts move forward
until our hearts stand still.

THE PREEMINENCE OF THE MEDICAL

In the anteroom, the chairs conveniently
arranged, solicit comfort for the
uncomfortable patients, who shyly
glance about and question each other's

Ailment. The magazines on the centered
Table offer vicarious holidays, comment
on the news, or cheerfully instruct.
But anatomy is forbidden, and the

Morbid avoided; even the wallpaper and
Upholstery conspire to make a death
untenable. Yet anxiety mocks the
explicit Colonial detail; and the blood

Pulses against the shut door where a diagnosis
will disclose an unpersuaded view of
things. One by one the patients disappear
into the inner office, and curiosity