

**THE PAINTED LADY**

Not the homely Bridgeport triple-decker,  
 like so many still surviving,  
 where incubated my elemental father  
 in a shoebox on the oven door,

this perfection as of a stranded shell,  
 this proud Victorian dowager,  
 her fancy porches ready for nobs to call,  
 she sails her gables, elegant, tall.

So recently esteemed, her colors are bright,  
 she glows, her gingerbread in trim,  
 a splendid magic castle full of light.  
 No street survives, no path to her gate.

She seems an apparition, rising high  
 from a blackened wasteland, deeply poisoned.  
 This is home to pylons, high voltage lines  
 and overpasses, crossed by tracks

as far as the eye can see, but none connect  
 to her and no one will come again.  
 It would be death to tread that field of black,  
 corrosive sponge. Should you evade

electrocution among these rails and switches,  
 the chemical soil would burn away  
 your boots, your clothes, your skin to patches.  
 This polluted ground can never

harbor life again. The very sight  
 breeds the black despair that seeps  
 in at the eyeholes. Now they have decided  
 it is time for her to leave.

They have opened her windows to the influx,  
 summoning in the outside to kill her.  
 Healthy and beautiful, she gets the push  
 for being useless to her place:

a vast industrial pit of stunning filth  
and danger. Her world has moved away.