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day or nite

You nod at parallels to 19th century Paris. You
were the brilliant rebel, doomed genius, the damned.
Does the city make the artist or defile him?
Maybe both. You were like that corner building--
meticulous brick and polished balustrades-- fronting
a brothel. Your poems seethed behind formal facades.
Your lines wept under carriage wheels, chimney soot.
Mine are free-- wrinkled with racket and smear.

Chuffing semis gather now to disgorge at sun-up.
Nothing is blossoming wicked and wild in rusty cans
on cracked stoops, only forgotten cold-burnt geraniums.
Sleepers roll over, restless before rising relentless
to track across Chicago's not-yet made-up face.

Look there-- a night-blooming cereus opens ghostly rare
in a florist's window. To the west, the top floor
of that steel/glass lance awaits new arrivals,
all hours. Steaming or frozen, the city is a womb.
The city incubates death, despair, discovery, desire,
greatness. She has character but outgrows her soul.
The city coughs, spits, curses. Still, Chicago
is a phoenix-- amassed ashes not her blight
but fuel for her strength.

Like your poetry, Mr. B. Maybe it'll fly in spring.
Maybe I'll find an old fashioned angel. Come back.