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In the Bauxite Belt

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G.C. WALDREP

In the Bauxite Belt

Its grip on the present light, unsteady
from one use to another,
this land collapses, gives itself up
to astringent pools.
Trestles lead nowhere. The company's fierce town plant
lies vacant, streets empty, receding into ore.
Slow as silt, the refinery squats
in its excavated vale, kilns revolving
once a month or year, rust flaking
in all directions. Waves of grain
disguise old slag heaps. They are in fact amber
and the way their heavy heads nod in wind
might be convincing enough to justify
some language of reclamation
which would be false, the defoliate earth
the same as it ever was
at Ducktown, the Florida phosphite fields
and the way in central Pennsylvania
mines not content with the lives
of men women and children may reach out and take
a town itself. *Centralia*. There it was fire,
but here a vast new inland sea
will take the chat piles at Ozark's edge.
Tourists will come from everywhere
to sail the sparkling surface; all fantastic
landscapes of dreaming will come to rest
and power will be generated as all things
pass having passed before
in other forms. Best that we were evicted.
Best they razed the theater, the commissary,
the picnic oaks, all memory of the lynching
out at Bryant and the way the flames

reddened the night horizon. O Lord of the mountains,
cover us. O Lord of sinter;
scatter us. Oh Lord of reaping—how much it takes
to drown or bury violence.