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Clarence Jones

The Cornman
St. John Fisher College

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Clarence Jones

Cover Page Footnote

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Clarence Jones

They buried Clarence Jones this Saturday afternoon
Saturday afternoon: a rusty razor blade
And I cannot forget his words, his ways, his whys
His tasteless words sloshing between his tarnished jaws:
Restless vegetable soup on a hobo's tireless fire
His house—its Delphic floor; its stained prosaic windows:
The where of sacrifice—dry and dark and brooding
Come, said the oriel, observe the drooping bar
And tavern neon dripping on his flashing face
There would he stand and look, thus would he look and see
Then would he feel for a buck he knew would not be there
Sad as a god who dropped his star.

There's poison in the holy water he would say
Drinking the cup of his accumulated suffering
Then would he minister to the day in muted beauty
Swinging his incense at the wheeling universe
A chain with a handless watch worn by the drops of time
Baptizing the stillborn hours, forgiving them to morn
Confirming them to noon, ordaining them to night
Anointing them in death, cremating them to ashes
Watching, waiting, longing for the dust to blossom
In the sundirt of his secret garden.

Some told him a poet; no one read him though
Yet I think he wrote of floods of yesterday
Of shrines of memory, of rites of recollection
Wondering in his memoried forgettances
Dreaming a dried up dream from the tooth of the elephant
Dreaming a withered dream from his remembrances
Wondering if someone, somewhere, sometime could be sadder
Perhaps an attic trumpet player.

Then he would shuffle over his prophetic floor
Even as shadowed lovers' hopeful broken whispers
Sighs and sounds of boards, sighs and sounds without words
Seeking his sun in the fire, seeking his shadow in the desert
Seeing his life in his limping, seeing his past in his journey
Just stumbling to humility.

A broken faced old man, a broken nosed old god
Somewhere, always lost in the epic throng he crept
Toward the silent pagan sacrament to die
With dry finality of good-bye.

Everyone quickly said with grave automatic concern
That the State would bury him.

—THE CORNMAN