

EXCERPT FROM RICHARD JONES'S *IOWA POEMS*

Awakening on the Train to Pleasantville after Realizing Your Life Has Been a Nightmare

Nightmare Begins Responsibility

This earnest repudiation of all flimflam
that has gone before it means nothing
All grandiosities in the eerinesses of logos wordplay
means nothing and

When I die irresponsibly alone
Or you perish in hunger's ennui
Wait for me at the end means nothing
on the other side of time where

Goethe awakened me
in his prosody
Just before the iron horses entered
the terminal

And I'll follow beyond this time where
"We'll be together again
Renaissance in a kosmosis revealed
Perfect arrays always in place means nothing
And we must resist the urge to move the
Pleasant peaceful symmetries

Not this countryside bootlegged
void hate where
We must avoid unction
until that time

When we rejoin the
Sweetest harmonies
Denied now
For nothing
For every determinate action
There is an equally determinate and opposite
A logically contrary reaction means nothing
For these agonies in
This negative universe
Zeroed out and balanced
By its positive space where

All death is life
All hate is love
All misunderstandings are understood
All insults are dignities
balanced out
Until so powerful a rapture
That this life's dream
is awakened fighting alligators
Crocodiles &

I'm preparing for this trip to infinity
This dying
 & you can go too
Unless you're afraid
 as well of nothing

The Mother

—*for Carol*

She was your mother
She was my mother
 She was gently singing
 Humming a ditty
And I heard her gently singing
 to my baby son
 the little song
Rocking in the old chair
 rock-a-bye baby
And it was so sweet
 so ancient
 so mightily right
 so primordial
 so softly gentle
That it connected me
 once again
 with that unspeakable
 delirious time
I so lay listening
 to my mother singing
 singing it me

So I know Carol is
 cosmically important
 because she is a
 mother
Now and forever
 untemporally late
 In her virtue
 rock-a-bye
For I was ever so happy
 when she got
 to that most perfect
 of all parts
About "the cradle and all"

Tracked Into a Room

Sometimes when I wonder if being born is like tracking
mud into a room
Or like breaking a beaded necklace in the backseat of a
Ford roadster
Circa 1935 before DNA and sperm were tadpoles

In grandeur a snake by way of which
I see unfinished detail everywhere there is another lost
bead
In found things that necessarily need attending to

Or I have already accomplished badly
Yet beyond these clever darkneses of the smudge pot
Lies another with eyes bright and capable of seeing
everything

And nothing in the presence of the crowing time
For the paucity all pleasures sample lapse into
sensibilities
Sullied pefidiousnesses of smooth black mud

My corpulent friend earth's good mountain dirt
Tracked onto the most opulent blue carpet in the finest
remembered room
Boots caked with mud like fresh redolent flesh

I repeatedly ponder such celebrated innocences
Of my own sly silly self and all other
Mighty grimy trespassers to and from the womb

Your virginal conscience bruises my heart
With the shadows of your lowered lashes
And beneath the dim lamp's prism romp

Sundogs leashed to the muddiest raindrops vaunted
Up in the gush of faintly proffered profundities where
we both
Wallow in the spattered guilt somber sublime

Clean
Tracked Into a Room