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## Elegy for Professor Longhair

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ELEGY FOR PROFESSOR LONGHAIR

Over the low lope of the bass, the highhat's chatter,  
I'll always hear that upright  
Stutter and sway—the Professor's playing  
His bareknuckle rhumba boogie on Rampart Street!  
Stand back now, it's the crawfish love call,  
It's the wild bell ringing for resurrection,  
It's the ghost of hambones in Congo Square,  
Voodoo by Jesus out of Jelly Roll!

I'll take my place in the second line,  
Do the zulu strut  
Where the brothers sweat through the streets,  
Slow drag and blues—O the bottom  
Done drop out the big drum and the horn's  
All empty, but the tourists still  
Step off the train, some hifi squalling  
*Get yo' ticket in yo' hand, you wanna go to New Orleans!*

I've come back now and you've gone.  
No gospel or *gris-gris*  
Could keep you here, however much  
You loved the jukejoints pouring out  
Bourbon and a smoky beat, the palm trees  
Lashing their green rhythm down Elysian Fields.  
These words are for the wide river  
That spreads forever south, and that black box

You rode like a raft into heaven.