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## Driving into Town

Rodney Jones

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Rodney Jones

## Driving into Town

Coming down Sand Mountain, many things moved with me in the car,  
the anger jarred from you,

A staticky Jonathan Winters tape, the Best of the Rolling Stones,  
And then I saw them, hatless, ungoverned, decamping from the church,  
a thread that flared to rope

And sprawled across the little lawn and knotted under trees:  
bald and freshly permed,

Many with dark coats and red ties or matching purses and shoes,  
Innocuous bigots with their retinues of fledgling weightlifters,  
maiden aunts of philosophy students,

Ex-coaches of insurance salesmen and guidance counselors,  
Architects dreaming the aesthetics of Alabama Savings & Loans,  
great ponderous femme-fatales

Trailing the mountainous sexual wonder of sixteen-year-old boys.

There was just that instant there, I boiled them in one glimpse  
and thought they'd maybe caucused

For a wedding or a death, or did they love the Lord so much  
they'd come

On Sunday, Wednesday, and now again on Friday afternoon,  
Perhaps to prove their faith with diamondbacks or strychnine?

And some of these, too,

I guessed, had formed the mob I'd seen Saturday two weeks ago  
that looked so magisterial, stentorian, Greek,

As it uncoiled in a stark festoon of white sheets and dunce's peaks  
toward some vitriolic  
Welder's speech against Earl Warren, Satan, the communists,  
the niggers, and the Jews:  
Distinguish them singly or mark them in the curve where they  
began to blur  
And fade along the piedmont of fescue, anguses, and machines.

Another mile of farms, the hills returned to hills, we passed  
a sorghum mill, a spotted mule  
And then, emblazoned on a barn, an advertisement for a waterfall  
where, later, we would stop  
And grip the rail and watch the violent, white, transfiguring  
stalk of water  
That seemed to rear as it drove down and shattered on the rocks  
and clarified beyond  
In many little streams that muddled on and vanished in the trees.  
Revisions.

Whatever else, there was that world, and then the world  
that was the world:  
River of darkness, river of air. We stood there happy. A year  
Before the marriage failed, the poem of that life already  
detonating in my hands,  
But it would take a long time to put the letter in the mail.