

# Clown

by Jack Ridl

Every day he disappears  
rubbing the thick, white paint  
deep into his web of wrinkles,  
down his leathered neck, across  
his forehead, watching the old  
skin turn into Jocko, interlocutor  
of laughs. He lives hidden  
behind the diamond eyes,  
red glob of a nose, mouth  
petrified wide in a grin.  
He's glad to lose his face  
behind the permanence  
of clown. Entering the center  
ring, he pushes a piglet  
in a wobbly, wicker pram,  
stops under the spotlight,  
stoops, and slowly steps into  
a little red schoolhouse.  
The audience quiets, waits,  
and when the band strikes up  
"Pomp and Circumstance,"  
the pig, full-grown in cap and  
gown, strolls out, Jocko trailing  
on a silver leash. They promenade  
once around the ring, then out  
and back to the trailer where  
Jocko hangs up the leash, sits,  
feels the entrance of gratitude  
for his red nose and graven smile.  
As he scrubs away the whiteface,  
red and yellow paint, the silver  
stars above each eyebrow, a face  
appears, one he doesn't recognize,  
one that stares then turns away.

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