

The Ghost of San Clemente

The mausoleum he shoulders,
In which his head rests inoffensively
Six feet about the ground,
Is a cicatrix scarring the earth,
A visible reminder he has died
Despite rumours that he lives yet,
A gossamer monument
To the persistence of human delusion.

The name etched in grimaces
Across his stained-glass facade
And the dates reclaiming him
From desolated nonexistence
Comprise the only information
Available to the generation of men
Among whom, in flustered utterances,
He still proclaims himself President.

Before sunrise and after its set,
He paces the beach, walks memories
On a leash, gropes in the half-light
For "Deep Throat" or agents of news media
Who might disclose clues to the holocaust
His "omissions" caused him to maliciously commit.
Only the gulls recognize his stooped shoulders
And dropsical gait: the ghost of Nero in retreat.

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