

1980

Garvey, Radiant

Bruce Smith

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Garvey, Radiant · *Bruce Smith*

Tonight, they're carrying the black boxes
into the basement of the Institute
and into the Center. They're bringing them
to the Union and into the midst of the Society.
They're carried, innocent and anonymous
as a lunch in brown paper where a fat apple
rests in a socket of bread. Tonight, they enter
the House and the Association. There in a closet
that stinks of detergent, the men take them in their hands
and kneel with them on the floor.

These are the lethal radios, black
as Garvey, the glorious brother,
bombast, sweet Duke of the Nile.
And like the shirt front of the Supreme
Potentate, these radios are studded and shine,
shine! The men are cleaning the buildings,
tonight, in his name. And while the invisible
waves rush through the marble
and plate to tighten the coils
in their hair, the air cracks
in the empty corridors with jazz
and a stroke is being made
in the boiler room. These men
are waiting for their number
to come in and fall like a black star
through the chest of the building. The silver
antennae point with their thin barrels
to heaven, to the Black Virgin Mother,
to that oily rainbow over the city.